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## **CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1968**

**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

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Story 1  
THE TALKING DISHTOWEL

Have you ever heard a dishtowel talk? You haven't! Well, I'll have to tell you about one that a little girl thought talked to her.

Betty Jane and Jean Marie were doing the dishes after supper and there were so many to be done that Betty Jane became quite fretful and cross.

"I get so tired of doing dishes all the time," she scolded, "I think I'm going to run away from home -- away where there are no brothers and sisters to dry dishes for."

"You must be forgetting that we eat at the same table, too. So we help to dirty these dishes," her sister chided sweetly. "And really, we shouldn't complain; think of all the work morn has to do to get such wonderful meals ready for all of us."

"I'm tired of doing dishes, just the same, and I'm going to run away and do as I please one of these days; see if I don't."

"Suit yourself, Sis; but I doubt that you'll stay long," and Jean Marie laughed softly, thinking how well her sister loved to eat.

"Rules! Rules! That's all we have around here."

"Say you're really down on the world and everybody in it tonight, Betty Jane!" Jean remarked, looking thoughtfully at her pretty sister.

"This makes the third dish-towel I'm needing tonight," Betty Jane said as she took another embroidered towel from the drawer in the cabinet below the counter top.

"And look how prettily mother has embroidered them! What does that one say?" Jean wanted to know.

Slowly, Betty Jane unfolded the pretty towel.

"Always be truthful!" Jean exclaimed, reading the embroidery beneath the little appliqued girl kneeling by her bedside saying her prayers. "That's such a good one for us. I love mother's dishtowels. Her pretty embroidery and darling appliques make doing dishes fun. Let's see, the other two said, 'Love one another,' and 'Be ye kind one to another.' Oh, I love them every one and I want to do just what the verses say on the towels."

Betty Jane made no comment. She became suddenly quiet and still and didn't scold another time all through the dishes. Jean Marie was glad, glad. She hated fussing, quarreling and scolding so much. She knew that Jesus wasn't pleased when anyone scolded and it made her heart hurt to hear her sister carry on so.

Betty Jane dried the last dish, then threw the dish towel onto the counter top and hurried upstairs, looking pale and funny.

"What's the matter with you?" Bobby asked, almost colliding with his sister as she seemed to fly up the stairs.

"She sure acts funny!" Billy scowled. "I heard her scolding all through the dishes."

"Not exactly all the way through the dishes," Bobby corrected. "She got suddenly quiet when she got that third dish-towel out of the drawer. I think something's bothering her and I have a hunch I know what that something is. She doesn't know that I know some things."

Billy merely looked at his brother and said nothing, too busy with putting his model airplane together.

"Where's Betty Jane?" mother asked, coming in from outside and searching for her brown-haired girl.

"She just ran upstairs -- nearly ran over me -- that's how fast she went. She's acting funny, Mother. But maybe it's just 'cause I don't understand girls," and Bobby laughed.

Mother went into the kitchen where Jean Marie was just finishing cleaning the counter top and wiping the table. "What's the matter with Betty Jane tonight? Bobby tells me she's been acting strangely."

"She had another of her cross times and just scolded and scolded," Jean Marie said. "She said she's going to run away from home, that she's tired of rules and doing dishes."

"Hm" was all mother said as she walked through the living room up the stairs.

"Betty Jane," she said, going into the bedroom the two girls shared. "What's bothering you?"

"I . . . I feel just . . . awful, Mother," the girl sobbed. "I... I guess I'm under conviction."

Mother said nothing, waiting anxiously to hear the confession, her heart weeping within her.

"I . . . I must tell you all, Mother, or that dishtowel may tell on me. It . . . it talked to me while I was drying the dishes tonight. It said, 'Always be truthful! Always be truthful! Just like it knew what I had done. I'm sorry, Mother. Honest I am. I've been so miserable since I lied to you.'"

"I'm sorry you lied, Betty Jane; for God knew all the time. Nothing's ever hidden from Him."

"I told you I had gone to Beth Ann's house to get some material for study the other night, but I lied. There was a program Beth had wanted me to see on their television, and I wanted so badly to see it, too; so Beth and I manufactured the lie. I felt badly all the time I was there for I knew that God saw me and was so displeased and grieved with what I was doing. Can you forgive me, Mother? And will you pray with me? I'm lost and I'll go to hell unless I get forgiven. I've been so miserable ever since I did that. And I've been so cross and just scold and scold. I want peace."

"I knew what you had done, Betty Jane. Mrs. Murphy called only today, wanting to know if you could come over and watch the program with Beth. She said you seemed to enjoy yourself so much while you were watching their T.V. I have been waiting for an opportune time to talk with you and this seems to be it. Never forget, dear, YOUR SINS WILL ALWAYS FIND YOU OUT, no matter how well concealed you may think you have them. Sin is one thing that cannot be hidden. Always, sooner or later, your sins will find you out. I'm happy to hear you tell me that you're sorry . . . and to have told me without my having to tell you that I knew what you had done. Now, after we have prayed and you find peace with God I want you to go over to the Murphy house and tell them that you are sorry for what you have done. You have been a poor witness for our Christian family, Betty."

"I know it, Mother, and I feel so ashamed of myself . . . to think I couldn't stand up and resist an invitation to watch something so... so defiling; for that's what it was. It made me feel wicked all over after I had watched it. But I do want to be saved and be a real Christian like you and father and Jean Marie and the boys are." "Then we shall pray."

"And, Mother, I want to thank you for embroidering every motto on those dish towels. I'm going to obey every one of them from here on and forever."

Betty Jane and mother had a real old-fashioned prayer meeting in the pretty bedroom by the bed and it wasn't long until the pretty little girl with the darling dimples had prayed clear through and found the love and peace of Jesus in her heart. She hurried downstairs and threw her arms about Jean Marie and kissed her, laughing softly, "I'm never going to run away from home now and

I'll never be scolding again. Jesus saved my soul. Forgive me for making life so miserable for all of you," and she looked at Billy and Bobby. Rushing into the kitchen she grabbed the wet dish towel and hugged it soundly. "Always be truthful," it said!

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February, 1968

Story 2

## THE CUCKOO CLOCK

Larry stumbled noisily up the back porch steps and kicked Muffin the cat soundly, sending her howling loudly beneath the porch to hide securely away from her tormentor.

"Muf-fin!" Darlene exclaimed, rushing to the porch in search of her beloved kitten. "Where are you? What happened to you? Muf -- fin," she called loudly.

"Forget about your old cat," Larry scowled, his face a shroud of ugliness and hatred.

"What did you do to Muffin?" Darlene asked anxiously, her hands clasped tightly together. "I wouldn't think to hurt your dog, Larry."

"You just better not hurt Bobo. He's the only friend I have. As for Muffin, well, it's for me to know what I did and for you to find out," He retorted sharply.

"Oh, Larry, if you hurt her..."

"What's the trouble?" Mother asked, facing the two.

"Larry hurt Muffin. I heard her cry and she's nowhere to be seen." Darlene was crying now.

"It's just an old cat," he replied angrily, going into the dining room and dropping his books loudly on to the table top.

"Larry!" Mother exclaimed, following her ten-year old. "You'd better settle down or you'll be getting some much needed attention from the thin switch in the kitchen.

"He's been hateful all day today," Darlene complained.

Larry settled himself in a chair at the table and began his homework, saying nothing, as Darlene ran out the door in search of her kitten.

As the boy studied, the hands on the cuckoo clock moved steadily towards the hour of four.

Suddenly the happy looking bird popped through the little door and sang joyfully, softly, "Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cu ..."

"Aw, be still!" he shouted, throwing a heavy book at the clock and knocking it on to the floor where the last sound heard was a loud dull, "go -- ong."

"Larry Breathitt!" and mother stood over him. "Go into the kitchen immediately. You and I have a pretty big business matter that needs settled. What is the matter with you?"

"I . . . I'm . . . tired of being called 'half-pint, midget, shorty ,and tiny.' That's what's the matter with me, Mother And when that old clock on the wall seemed to be saying 'midget, midget, midget', I just couldn't stand any more. Why didn't the Lord make me as big as other boys my age? Why must I be called 'shorty' and 'halfpint?' Why? It's not fair. That's all there is to it."

"Don't charge God foolishly, my boy. That is sin. Furthermore, your growing days are far from over. If Jesus spares your life you may well grow up to be six foot or more; as both your father's side and mine have many tall people. But you are a midget, Larry -- in a way that really hurts me and breaks my heart."

"You, too, Mom?" and the boy burst into tears.

"Yes, dear boy. A really real midget.., in your soul. In fact, you're so much a midget until one can't see you at all. Nothing but ugliness reflects from you and it's not nice to look it. I shall have to punish you, Larry; but first I'm going to have prayer with you. The Lord would love to make you tall, tall . . . on the inside . . . a real giant, in fact. But He can't do one thing unless my boy is willing and ready to cooperate with Him and take the prescription of repentance and restitution. It's a bit bitter, but it yields the peaceable fruits of..."

"Oh, Mom, I'm ready and willing. Right now, too." The boy interrupted tearfully. "I'm so miserable until I hate myself. I . . . I'm ashamed of the way I've been acting to everybody, but I just can't seem to help myself when the boys holler at me and call me all those names. I can't help it that I'm smaller than they are."

"We'll pray, Larry: Really pray, and if you'll open your heart to Jesus and tell Him how sinful and hateful you've been, He'll make of you a brand new creature in Christ Jesus and you'll not fret so about your stature."

And Larry did tell Jesus all about how hateful and mean he was and in an instant.., a single instant.., the blessed Lord Jesus came into his heart and he felt all the hatred and bitterness being swept away, washed in Jesus precious blood.

"Oh, Mom, it's wonderful to be new! I'm new . . . all over new . . . from the inside out. I felt it happen."

Rushing in from school the following evening, Larry shouted, "Mom! Mom, guess what? The boys called me midget, tiny, half-pint, and shorty all day today and it never even bothered me. Imagine! I even laughed about it. Oh, Jesus does make the difference! And Mom, do you know what Mr. Baskins said to me? He said, 'Larry, you're really growing . . . on the inside. I noticed the

difference in you today. You're going to be big one of these days... really big.., if you continue your inner growth.' "

"That's wonderful, Larry. Just wonderful."

"Well, I was just thinking that since I owe it all to Jesus and since He did such a wonderful work in my heart and life in this first experience, I feel I need to be entirely sanctified. I'm going into my room and pray and ask Jesus to sanctify my heart and take all of the self-life out and fill me completely with His Holy Spirit," and he started for the bedroom. "One thing more, Mother, I'll run errands for the grocery man and pay to have the cuckoo clock fixed. I can almost hear it saying, 'Sanctified! Sanctified! Sanctified!'" With that, the "new" boy hurried to his bedroom, his face wreathed in peace and contentment.

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March, 1968

Story 3

### THE TEA PARTY

The morning dawned bright, sunny and clear. The sun peeked its bright warm face in through Laurie's cheery bedroom window and seemed to be playing hide and seek with her long black braids as its rays flitted in and out among the branches of the big magnolia tree outside. A happy mocking bird broke lustily in song, mimicking and mocking every bird in his immediate vicinity. Laurie suddenly sat up, rubbing her sleepy eyes and tossing the sheet off her body. Her nimble legs soon had her on the floor and by the window.

"You beautiful, beautiful bird!" she said through the open window," watching as he raised his head high in fervent song. "I'll have to invite you to my tea party today. You could furnish us with lovely music," and she laughed gleefully as he mimicked the robin's soft sweet song, soaring suddenly into a shrill soprano; then back to the soft overtures of the nightingale.

"Have you invited all your guests, dear?" Mother asked as she kissed the silken head by the window.

"Oh, yes, Mother. I did that two days ago. Remember? And this is going to be the grandest tea party a girl ever had," and her childish laughter rippled out across the sprawling lawn like the ripple of the brook that meandered and ribboned its way across the acreage at the bottom of the hill.

"You always have grand tea parties, Laurie. Why, even I enjoy them," and Mother laughed softly as she straightened Laurie's bed covers. Did my girl rest well?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, Mother. I slept all through the night and had the sweetest dream."

"And ,what did you dream, honey? Of ice cream and lollipops?"

Laurie laughed as she ran to Mother and flung her childish arms around her neck. "You say the cutest things," she said, then sobered up a bit. "No, I dreamed that I was invited to a party."

"Dear me!" Mother exclaimed. "I'm afraid my girl has had parties so much on her mind until she's dreaming about them."

"This party was different, Mother."

"Different? In what way, honey?"

"It was beneath a big magnolia tree. There were lots and lots of poor little raggedy looking girls there. I was the only girl in nice clothes and I felt so... so..., out of place."

"Whom have you invited, Laurie?" Mother asked.

Laurie quoted her complete list to Mother, counting each one on her fingers.

"Do you suppose the Lord may be trying to talk to your heart, Laurie?" Mother asked seriously.

"I didn't think of that," Laurie answered honestly.

"Think hard, honey, All the girls you've invited are from big, fine homes -- all, that is, but one."

"You... You... mean... Oh, Mother! I never thought of that," and Laurie's radiant face was suddenly shadowed, with tears. "I wouldn't hurt Joyce Ann for anything in all the world."

"I know you wouldn't, honey. But she's a very poor girl and doesn't have fine clothes and nice things like the other girls have," Mother said.

"She could wear some of my clothes," Laurie said joyfully. "There's my pretty blue dress -she'd look beautiful in that."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do," Mother said sadly.

"Oh, Mother. What will I do? I can't let Joyce feel badly and out of place. I love her." For a long time Laurie stood looking out the window and praying silently. Turning sweetly to Mother she said, "I know what I'll do. The dear Lord Jesus has shown me what to do. You remember the verse you read to me last week?"

Mother nodded sweetly and said nothing as Laurie ran downstairs to the telephone. In a short while she returned, her face beaming and radiant. "It's all taken care of," she laughed as she dressed herself.

At one o'clock the little guests began to arrive. Laurie met each one at the gate and extended a warm welcome to all.

"Now, shall we go to the big magnolia tree!" she said, leading the laughing group of merry-makers to the spreading tree where Mother had three small tables spread with all kinds of good cookies and milk, served in tiny tea cups.

The group listened to the songs of the happy mockingbird and played church and house all morning and, after each guest had departed and Mother and Laurie were clearing the tables, Mother said,

"Laurie, I'm very proud of what you did. You had a wonderful 'tea' party."

"It was the best one ever, Mother, and I'm so glad for my last week's memory verse!"

"Can you quote it for me, dear?" Mother wondered.

"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

"And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

"That's wonderful, Laurie," Mother said. "Did the Billings girls enjoy themselves?"

"Mother," Laurie said excitedly. "They said it was the most wonderful thing they'd ever been to; and Joyce Ann was sweeter than ever. She told Catherine Lanning she should be going to church with us!"

"She did!" Mother exclaimed. "What did Catherine say?"

"She said she'd go with us every Sunday if her mother would allow it. I shall always invite the poor, those who can't invite me back. Why, Joyce Ann and Mira and Sally Billings and Lena Kore never attended a tea party before. They're so poor, (Joyce Ann told me), until they don't have one pair of Sunday shoes even."

"That's too bad," Mother said thoughtfully. "Perhaps we may be able to do something for them."

"I know," Laurie said joyfully. "I shall see how much money I have in my piggy bank and maybe I shall be able to buy them a pair of shoes. For if Jesus is happy when we invite the poor for something to eat, wouldn't He be a lot happier if we bought them something to wear?" and her deep blue eyes sparkled.

"Thou shalt be blessed," Mother whispered, brushing the tears away from her eyes. "For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

The mocking bird landed on a limb directly above the tables and seemed to be singing "Thou shalt be blessed; Thou shalt be blessed," as Laurie worked busily away.

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April, 1968

Story 4

#### JIMMY'S EASTER

Jimmy stood inside the picture window and watched the children running and skipping about in the big park across the street from his house. The girls were dressed in their Sunday best and carried colorful baskets on their arms. They were eager and excited and their gay laughter floated in through the open screen door to where Jimmy stood.

This was the 'big' day, and to say Jimmy hadn't enjoyed it himself once would be false. But something happened to change the boy's desires and he looked on the excited group today with a big ache and a hurt way down deep in his heart.

Always, so long as Jimmy could remember, there had been a big Easter egg hunt in City Park each year on Easter Sunday and Jimmy had been a happy and excited attendant, and always, he had come away with no less than seven or eight eggs. Beside this, he had been chosen 'Best Dressed Young Beau' on several different occasions in the Easter parade for the young.

How foolish it all seemed now, and how vain! To think that he ever believed an Easter bunny brought him the brightly-colored eggs and the luscious chocolates and marshmallow bunnies and chicks! He was glad he had learned the truth.

He walked silently away from the window, into the kitchen where mother was washing the dinner dishes. He took a clean tea-towel out of the drawer and began to dry the dishes.

"Do you feel badly about the egg hunt?" Mother asked sweetly.

"Oh, Mother, indeed not. It all seems so worldly and so vain since Jesus saved and sanctified my soul."

"Indeed it does," and a tear glimmered and shone in mother's fine dark eyes. "I'm thoroughly ashamed when I think how your father and I led you into thinking that Easter was a time for displaying new and fine clothing and laughing over the fact that you believed some rabbit colored your eggs and brought them to you while you slept. But I... I never really knew what Easter meant, either. Our preacher never preached about the blessed and glorious resurrection," and she shuddered slightly. "We were just like heathen, Jimmy, both father and I, and we'd still be heathen if you . . . hadn't gotten sick and nearly..."

She never finished the statement. Jimmy knew why; it hurt her too deeply to think upon those nearly three months when the doctor said he'd never get well. And perhaps he wouldn't have!

But a man who had worked with his father sent his preacher to the hospital to pray with Jimmy and anoint him with oil. Said it was the Bible thing to do when anyone was sick.

Mother and father watched with great interest and curiosity as the humble preacher (who wept over Jimmy just like he had always known him) anointed his feverish brow and prayed the prayer of faith which soon had Jimmy on the 'mending side.' From that time on he made steady, if not rapid, improvement, and to the utter amazement and astonishment of both doctors and nurses, he was soon well enough to go home.

He remembered how, when he was strong enough, he had asked to be taken to the church of the preacher who had anointed and prayed for him. It was a little church located in a neat area of the city. Its construction and furnishings were simple but most attractive. For all its simplicity, it held an air of worship and fascination for the new family who found a pew near the center of the building.

That was a wonderful morning! For the first time ever they heard the beautiful Gospel message of salvation from sin; and that morning, nearly five months ago, Jimmy, his father and mother, went to the little altar at the front of the church and were gloriously converted.

From that day on the little church had three new, faithful, enthusiastic scholars and attendants. There, it was, the three heard about entire sanctification and were marvelously sanctified and delivered from the old carnal nature.

The Easter story was preached in all its beauty and glory and, to this family of new-comers, it had real meaning and significance. They had heard the true Easter story. It was not a day for finery and display but was, rather, a sacred and joyous time, all because of the resurrection! Of their Christ!

"Oh, Jimmy, I am so thankful!" Mother brought her boy out of his reverie. "We'd still be in darkness if we hadn't gone to the little church on Maple Street."

"And, Mother, I just love our Sunday School lessons and the preacher's sermons. I've learned so much about the Bible since we started going there. We never heard such things in the big church downtown on High Street. Why, the Bible's come alive for me since my Sunday School teacher's been showing me how to read it so I can get through it entirely this year. It's all so wonderful and different from putting models together and being taught constructive things and how to get along with classmates. We have all this in school in psychology. I see that God wants for us to learn about Him when we go to church, and we're doing just that in the church where we're going now. Oh, I'm so glad I got sick and met Rev. Thurston."  
"God was in it all, dear."

A loud roar of laughter floated in through the open screen-door. It sounded like the park was crowded more than ever. As Jimmy thought of the desecration going on in the park..., desecration of the one day the Lord had set aside for rest..., he started singing softly,

"He lives. He lives."

Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives. He lives, salvation to impart.  
You ask me how I know He lives . . .  
He lives within my heart."

\* \* \* \* \*

May, 1968

Story 5-A  
KING FOR FATHER

CHAPTER I

"How much do you have, Stephen?" Deborah asked her brother as he carefully counted the money from his metal savings bank.

"I have exactly twelve dollars and seventeen cents," he said, heaping the contents of the bank in piles on the bedroom floor.

"And I had thirteen dollars and sixty-eight cents in mine. That makes . . . twenty-five dollars and eighty-five cents!" Steve exclaimed, clapping his hands together joyfully. "We can get it, Debbie! We can get it! Let's go."

"Do you really think it's the thing to do, Steve? Do you think . . .? Are you sure father and mother won't mind?" And Deborah cocked her pretty blonde head at an angle and faced her brother with a puzzled, thoughtful look. "What do you think, Steve? Is it all right or is it not all right? Would father like his gift?" She was all questions.

"Oh, Sis, you know father would like it. He'd love it. I know he would." Steve spoke convincingly. "All his life he's wanted one. I think this would be the surprise of surprises for him. I can just see his face when we present it to him and .... "

"O. K., Steve I'm convinced .. fully convinced." She laughed ever so lightly, then looked her brother full in the face "Say, you'd make a good speaker! At least you'd be able to convince suprised, and excited, over this as you and I are." And she skipped merrily by her brother's side down the stairs, out the door, and down the sidewalk to the heart of town.

"Here it is, Debbie!" Steve exclaimed, pausing in front of "Mertz's Pet Shop." See that bluegray one over in the corner? Isn't he a beauty?" His eyes lit up eagerly at sight of the fat little puppy. "Mr. Mertz said we can have him for exactly twenty dollars."

"Oh, Steve, he's beautiful!" Debbie was carried completely away with the playful-looking puppy. "He's beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Even now I can feel his plump little warm body snuggling

close to me in my arms. Let's buy him. Quick! That man in there might want him." And they made their way into the crowded shop.

"We came to get him, Mr. Mertz." Steve exclaimed, mannishlike, smiling warmly into the shop owner's face.

Mr. Mertz looked shocked. "Twenty dollars, Steve." He said, not expecting what he heard.

"I've got it for you," and Steve reached into his pocket as evidence.

"Another man's interested in him, Steve."

"You... you..., mean we can't have him?" and Deborah's face was suddenly clouded and crestfallen.

"He... he... was to have been for father." Steve said sadly, "A .. A... Father's Day present."

"For . . . Father's Day?" and Mr. Mertz's face twisted in a funny little smile. "Do . . . you... ah, suppose he'll like his Father's Day present?" he asked carefully "I . . . uh, did hear you correctly did I not?"

"Why Yes. We wanted him for Father's Day." Steve's eyes pled now. "Dad'll love him! All his life he's wanted a dog like that a real dog. His folks were too poor to buy him one when he was, a boy. They had a big family and were trying to buy a farm, too, father said. Money didn't come as easy as it does today, from all Dad said. Now that Dad's older, he'd still like a German Shepherd. We'd have one, too, if . . . if . . . it wasn't for Mr. Weathers. He's our neighbor and he . . . he . . . hates dogs and children.

"Do you think you should buy the pup under those circumstances, Steve?"

"Deborah and I have everything arranged and planned. We'll take care of him and keep him out of Mr. Weathers' yard. We... we'd like awfully much to make daddy's wish come true, Mr. Mertz."

"We've been saving our pennies and nickels and dimes for ever so long." Debbie explained tearfully. "And we . . . we've been praying real hard for poor old Mr. Weathers. You see, he needs Jesus. When he gets saved he'll like us and our puppy. I... I know that darling puppy will love us; because we'll love him and be good to him."

For a long time the shop owner studied the faces of the two lovely, honest, and sincere children. He spoke then, softly and hoarsely, bright tears shining in his German eyes, "You shall have the puppy. He'll never get a better home. The Christian home is a wonderful home . . . the only home to raise children in. Properly, that is. Maybe puppies, too," he laughed. "I know one father who will be really surprised tomorrow. Not only surprised; proud, too, proud of two fine children."

"Are you a Christian, Mr. Mertz?" Deborah asked, surprising the man.

"Well, no." He ran his fingers through his hair nervously.

"Why don't you get saved and become one, then?" Debbie pressed innocently, sincerely. "You'd make a real Christian. You have kind eyes and a kind voice, and .. and.., you could talk to people about their souls."

"Thanks, Debbie, I . . . I'd like to be saved. I may surprise you and Steve some day and really become a Christian."

"Make it soon," Steve said happily, as Mr. Mertz walked over to the puppies that were sleeping in the shop window.

"Here, King." He called softly to the fat, furry pup. "I have a home for you. A sure enough good home."

King rolled over lazily and opened his dark eyes; then he sat up and yawned mischievously.

"Oh, Steve, he's a darling!" Deborah exclaimed. "He's the prettiest puppy I've ever seen." But Steve never heard; he was too busy counting the money out for Mr. Mertz.

"Whew!" That takes a load out of my pockets and a weight off me," he laughed when the exact amount lay on the counter.

"I'll take only fifteen dollars from you. That's all I want. You run along now and good luck to you. Let me hear how your dad likes his gift," he called as Steve and Debbie thanked him graciously, then started home.

"We'll put him in the big box I use for a playpen for my dolls," Debbie said, as they neared the house. "It's in my playhouse and no one will go in there."

As the children started down the driveway toward the garage, Mr. Weathers glared at them. "What you got there?" he demanded angrily.

"A... a puppy." Deborah stammered, trying vainly to hide the furry little creature from the critical eyes of the neighbor.

"A dog, you say? Well, I not like children, much less dogs. If he so much as sets foot on my place I... I'll kill him! Do you hear? I'll kill him."

"He'll stay home," Steve said softly, smiling at the sour-faced man who Walked hastily into the house.

"He scares me when he hollers like that!" Deborah exclaimed, putting King gently down into the big box.

"And he means what he says!" Steve added, terror filling his heart.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO KING?,  
See next month's story.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 1968

Story 5-B  
KING FOR FATHER

Chapter 2

"Happy Father's Day!" Steve and Debbie echoed together the following morning, holding King out to their daddy, a bright red ribbon tied clumsily about the dog's furry, little, fat neck.

"Steve! Deborah! A . . . a puppy! For me? And just like I've always wanted Oh, Thank you! Thank you!" Father was in tears.

The spurt of emotion was too much for King. "Woof, woof, woof!" He exclaimed in his little dog language, wagging his tail furiously and licking the hand of his big master, whom he liked in an instant.

"You said you always wanted a German Shepherd, Father, so we saved and saved and saved until we had enough to buy King." Steve said, beaming proudly at the little ball of fur his daddy held Close to his breast.

"Oh, I love him, children! King is the name? Is that right?"

"Mr. Mertz told us that was his name," Debbie laughed.

"And a right good name it is. He'll live up to that name; See if he doesn't." Father said, looking the intelligent-looking pup in the eyes. "We'll have to build a fence or a pen so he'll stay out of Mr. Weathers' yard."

"We thought about that, too," Steve said, grown-up-like, "Since Mr. Mertz charged us only fifteen dollars instead of twenty, like the original asking price, Debbie and I have ten dollars and eighty-five cents to give you on a pen for King." and Steve handed the paper bag containing the money, to his father.

'King grew and grew. Except for the walks on a leash with Steve and Debbie, he remained in the fenced-in pen. As the dog grew into full maturity, old Mr. Weathers became more and more

irritable and cross. Always, it seemed, he was looking for a reason to blame King for something. Repeatedly, he threatened to kill the dog.

Steve and Debbie prayed harder and harder.

"He's a most unhappy soul," Father said sadly at family worship one day. "We shall have to do our best to win him to Jesus. He needs Him sorely." So the prayers continued in the house next to the sour and critical old man.

It was weeks later that Steve was suddenly awakened by loud barking from a dog. It sounded like the 'Williams' dog at first. He sure was making a terrible racket. Poor old Mr. Weathers would have the police out, sure enough. Steve sat suddenly upright. It wasn't the Boxer Bull of the neighbor's; it was King! He jumped out of bed and raced to the bathroom window where he had a commanding view of the back yard and King's pen. King was nearly frantic! Something was out there . . . somebody, perhaps! A cold chill raced up and down the boy's back. What should he do? Mr. Weathers would kill him for sure now!

A sudden movement on Mr. Weathers' back porch convinced Steve that the old man was headed for the pen with some poison, or something whereby to quiet the dog for good. King jumped higher, and higher, and higher. In a last desperate lunge, he cleared the top of the pen and raced with lightning speed to Mr. Weathers' back porch. King was loose! A terrible battle was raging on the back porch; Steve could hear it and, occasionally, he saw the shadow of man and beast in a vicious struggle.., each trying to outdo the other. He wanted to shout; to scream, but nothing would come. His voice seemed paralyzed from fear for the dog ... the beloved dog he and Debbie had saved money for ever so long, to make father's wish come true.

Steve buried his head in his hands and wept softly. "King, oh, King!," he moaned, "Why did you jump out over your pen? Why?" He asked through the open window, hoping the obedient, intelligent dog would hear and come bounding home.

"Troubles, Son?" And Steve's father laid a gentle hand on his trembling shoulders.

"Oh, Daddy, Mr. Weathers will kill King for sure now! Why did he . . .?"

"Oh, I don't know about that, Steve! Look over at the house."

Steve lifted his tear-stained eyes. "Why... why.., the place is all lit up and.., and.., there's cops over on the porch. What happened, Dad?"

"Nothing much." He laughed softly. "King just captured a burglar who almost stripped Mr. Weathers of all his money, that's all. I... I... think Mr. Weathers will have a peculiarly wonderful attachment and love for King, Steve."

"How ..how... do you know it was a burglar, Dad?"

"Because King awakened me about ten minutes ago. I watched from this same window and I saw the intruder trying to pick the lock on the back door over there. So-o, what do I do? Hurry down the stairs, and call the police. That's what. But before they could get here, King had taken things in his own hands, he's done a good job of it too, from the looks of things. Let's get over to the old man. I figure he may need a supporting arm right now and I'm going to lend him mine to lean upon."

As Steve and his father entered Mr. Weathers' door, King, his fur matted with blood from a wound the burglar had inflicted, slipped in beside his master.

"NO, no, King!" Steve said gently, flinging his arms around the brave animal's neck and leading him toward the porch. "Not in here, old boy. You and I'll stay on the porch and. . . ."  
"No, you won't, Son."

Steve couldn't believe his ears. Mr. Weathers had never sounded so warm! And he had called him "Son!" And . . . and.., the old man was hugging King and . . . and.., crying into his fur! Steve blinked his eyes several times to make sure he wasn't dreaming all he saw.

"I ...I... owe my life to you good people and to this wonderful dog." And Mr. Weathers was trembling all over as he looked at Steve and King. "You . . . you're welcome to my house anytime . . . any of you. That includes King," he added softly, stroking the dog gently.

"Why not come over to the house and spend the rest of this night in our guest-room, Mr. Weathers?" Father asked, placing a loving arm around the old man's shoulders. "I think you'd rest better at our house than here. The police have the burglar but you're far from relaxed."

Mr. Weathers looked shocked, stunned. "I . . . I . . . don't feel worthy to . . . to enter your door, Mr. Paulding." "I've been a harsh old man and a cross, troublesome neighbor. Can... you..., forgive me? All of you, including King?" "You are freely forgiven, Mr. Weathers. We have been praying hard for your salvation and . . ."

"I want to be a Christian, now!" and the old man dropped to his knees where he prayed through to glorious forgiveness and wonderful victory.

"Things sure changed in the neighborhood after that!

"I just love Mr. Weathers!" Deborah remarked to Steve one day. "He's the sweetest old man ever since he has Jesus living in his heart. Why, he fixed Maggie's old broken arm yesterday and it's staying together, too."

"King sees the difference, too lie's on Mr. Weathers' porch almost as much as he is on ours," and Steve laughed contentedly. "Well, I'll see you later, Sis; Mr. Weathers promised to make me a kite." and away the boy ran to the old man's back porch with King trotting gleefully by his side.

\* \* \* \* \*

July, 1968

Story 6

BOBBY'S "AND IF"

Bobby climbed the stairs and walked quietly into his bedroom. Looking furtively down the hallway he dosed the door softly, softly. Reaching down into the very bottom of his pants pocket he brought out the little piece of cardboard he had hidden securely and safely there. He held it up before him and looked intently at it. For some unexplainable reason he felt glad, exultant, and happy and... and.., wicked and funny.., all at the same time! Now wasn't that something! All those funny, mixed-up feelings in his little eight-year-old heart! Well, he would let that wicked feeling bother him no longer!

Roughly, he shoved the cardboard circus ticket way down deep in his pants pocket. He was going, that was all there was to it; and that other funny, wicked feeling need bother him no more. No, sir! He had a mind of his own! After a l l, he hadn't lied to father or mother -- that hadn't been necessary. They knew he was going over to Keith's house for the afternoon. Fact of the matter was, they had given him permission to spend the afternoon there. Oh, they didn't know anything about the plans Keith had made. But, then, he wouldn't tell them and they'd never know where he and Keith had been that afternoon!

Some little tender something inside Bobby seemed to be crying as he harbored these deceitful thoughts in his mind and cherished them fondly to his breast. "You're on dangerous ground, Bobby!" it warned. "You're on slippery ground! You know your mother and father wouldn't want you going to the circus. You're a deceiver and God will judge you for this. Better not do it, Bobby! "The heart is deceitful . . . and desperately wicked ....."

"Oh, be still!" Bobby said, half aloud, "I've never been to a circus before and this time I'm going."

"You'll be disobeying if you go," the tender little voice reminded patiently.

"They're not going to know I went," Bobby answered crossly, tartly. He reached into his pocket and felt again of the hard piece of cardboard ticket, then went whistling merrily down the stairs.

"I'll see you around suppertime, Mother," he called, as he hurried out the door and down the steps to the lawn.

"Be a good boy, Bobby, and obey all your father and I have told you to do and not to do," mother called after him softly.

"Obey, Bobby," the tender voice reminded. "Obey...!"

"Oh, leave me alone, will you?" Bobby hollered. "Stay back in the house this afternoon. I'm going to that circus and that's that!"

Keith was sitting on the front porch steps waiting as Bobby ran across the lawn.

"Let's get going; Bobby," he said. "I hear the elephant stunt's really something! And those tigers jumping through the barrels sounds great, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, I guess so, Keith." Bobby felt of the hard ticket again. "I'm sure glad you gave me this ticket."

"Dad knows you're my best buddy so he bought one for you, too." Keith's freckled face was all aglow with smiles.

"That's great!" Bobby exclaimed, as the two hurried down the street to the big circus tent.

Bobby's little tender 'Conscience Voice' must have obeyed him and remained behind, somewhere along the way, for he forgot all about feeling funny once inside the tent.

"Look at all those animals, Keith!" he exclaimed in great excitement. "Just look at them!"

"I told you it'd be something, Bobby; something great. Aren't you glad you came?"

Since the little "conscience voice" was no where near (it seemed), Bobby answered enthusiastically, "Am I ever!" His eyes were wide with wonder and when a lion roared so loudly that the big tent shook and vibrated from the sound, a cold chill raced madly up and down his spine. "Maybe I... I . . . shouldn't have come," he whispered softly to himself.

A voice broke in upon his heart musings . . . a voice so big and loud that it drowned the roar of the lion out: "And now, Ladies and Gentlemen," the man boomed out over the loudspeaker, "you are about to see a miracle . . . a 'human' fly. Watch carefully, now."

"Human fly?" Keith questioned, "What does he mean?"

"Sh-h! Keith. See over yonder?" Bobby pointed to a far corner of a steep tent within their own big tent. "There's a man climb-- ing .. the.., the.., tent; with not a thing to hold on to. Oh, Keith!" Bobby gasped and held his breath as the fellow climbed higher and higher and higher. The climber was far above their heads now. They scarcely breathed. Some, where in the audience a woman screamed a long, shrill, loud scream that was almost like a wail.

"She... she.., must be . . . scared," Bobby said, his teeth chattering so that he could hardly talk.

"NO NOISE, PLEASE!" the voice boomed over the loudspeaker. It sounded rough and harsh now and the boys knew whoever was doing the announcing meant business. "ABSOLUTELY

NO NOISE! THIS IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. THE SLIGHTEST THING MIGHT  
DISTRACT HIM. AND IF... "

The man didn't finish his sentence, Everyone knew what he meant. Bobby felt glued to his seat. Once the man couldn't seem to find a hold . . . , but he did. Finally, to the relief of everybody, he began to descend. All the way home Bobby and Keith chatted excitedly . . . between mouthfuls of hot popcorn and chewy taffy Keith had bought.

"What if that man would have dropped!" Bobby exclaimed, his mouth so full of taffy that the words were barely distinguishable.

"It would have been too bad for him!" Keith laughed. "Maybe... he'd have dropped . . . on . . . on us, Bobby! He seemed to be right above our heads." Keith grew suddenly thoughtful.

Bobby gasped, Suddenly, there along the street home, his little, tender 'Conscience Voice' joined him. "And if he had fallen on you and killed you, you'd not have been ready to die and meet God!" it reminded.

He was right, too! Bobby knew he wouldn't be ready to meet God. Swallowing hard, he said, "Thanks, Keith, for everything . . . I . . . I've got to get home. I have some business to take care of," and away Bobby ran.

"And if . . . " the little voice prodded intensely. "I'm your friend, Bobby. One of your best friends. Don't ever scold me and tell me to leave you alone. You might regret that some day."

"I . . . I . . . know it," Bobby stammered aloud, crying. "Stay with me, Little Conscience Voice. Don't ever leave me again. Come home with me and always stay with me and live in me. I have a worldly heart but I'm going to tell mother and father everything and then, then . . . I'm going to ask Jesus to forgive me and to come into my heart to live forever and ever. I'm going to make straight paths for my feet," and Bobby ran faster than ever. His little "conscience voice" ran, too, every step of the way home, Soon, soon, Bobby's heart would be washed all white. The little "voice" knew this and rejoiced.

\* \* \* \* \*

August, 1968

Story 7

THE NAUGHTY SHADOW

The sound of soft footsteps on the front porch sent Gay and Ray scurrying frantically out the rear door, across the screened-in back porch to the seclusion of the drooping willows at the far end of the sprawling lawn. Tell-tale crumbs and light amber-colored filling of the luscious butterscotch pie clung to the corners of their mouth.

"That sure was good!" Ray exclaimed, seating himself at the very base of the stoutest tree, trying ever so hard to hide himself.

"Yes, but I feel bad, Ray. Mother told us not to touch the pie. She wanted it for supper, and we ate half of it. I think I'll go back to the house and tell her I'm sorry I was so disobedient."

"Don't you dare!" Ray exclaimed angrily "She won't know we ate it if you don't tell her. After all, Uncle Bill's in the house. He's too deaf to understand if she asks him. She'll think he got hungry and ate it."

"But God knows we did it! And my heart feels all funny and bad inside," Gay admitted honestly, 'I don't like this feeling; and Ray, the pie doesn't seem nearly so good now since I know we did wrong. And one more thing, I'm not going to let Uncle Bill be blamed for something he didn't do. I'm going to tell mother right now and see if I can't get rid of this awful feeling inside of me. It scares me!"

"Don't you dare!" Ray exclaimed the second time. "You're a big sissy, that's what you are. A big, conscientious sissy What difference does it make, after all? We ate our pie before supper; the others will have theirs after supper. Now forget about it and enjoy that heavenly, buttery flavor. Um-m! No one, but no one can make butterscotch pie and chocolate pie like Mother! She's the world's champion" And Ray stroked his full stomach in a satisfied sort of way, like father did after a genuinely good, hearty meal.

He stretched his legs out before him and leaned his back lazily against the tree trunk. "This calls for a little sleep," he added, closing his eyes and visualizing an island made up of trees containing nothing but butterscotch and chocolate pies exactly like Mother made.

He was soon sleeping soundly, dreaming pleasantly of having nothing to do except sit in the shade of a big, leafy tree and eat butterscotch pie, butterscotch pie, and more butterscotch pie. Oh, what luxury! What bliss! All the butterscotch pie he could eat! So he sat there, day after day after day, eating, eating, eating -- butterscotch pie! He was growing too! If not in height, at least he was expanding in width, dimension and circumference.

The days passed. He continued living in the "Land of Butterscotch Pie." One day he tried to raise his body to go to a nearby well for a drink of water. How heavy he felt and how clumsy he was at rising! Why, this wasn't at all like the nimble, quick, agile and boyish Ray he used to be! He waddled clumsily toward the well and tried stooping over for a drink of the cold running water; but, wait a minute; he couldn't stoop! He had grown too much . . . in width and depth. Beside all this, something in his dream kept nagging him. Something that kept saying over and over again and again, "You've done wrong! You know you did wrong. You can't do wrong and get by; I won't let you. Be sure your sin will find you out! Be sure.. Be sure... be sure ....." it repeated over and over and over.

Ray tried to run from the well, but he was too fat and clumsy. His feet seemed to stumble over each other. He looked suddenly behind him, and then he saw it . . . an ugly, black, short, squatty looking something that was about to pounce upon him. He tried to run, but found he could

do nothing except stumble over his own feet. He had to get away. That horrid looking black creature would get him any minute! "Be sure. . . be sure . . . be sure . . . your sin ... be sure...", a little voice kept accusing, screaming at him.

Again he tried to run away. Each time he took a step the fat, black, scary-looking creature took a step towards, him ..... When he stopped, it stopped. The suspense was sheer torture. "Go away!" he exclaimed. "Let me alone! Go away!" Still the fat, black thing remained, seeming to mock him, torture him, challenge him!

He made a desperate attempt to run, run, run. The black thing tried, too. With a scream he fell flat on the ground. The thing in back of him seemed to jump directly upon his back.

"Help me! Oh, Mother, Father, help!" He screamed loudly; so loudly, in fact, that he awakened himself. He sat up and looked around him. Gay was nowhere to be seen. He looked down at himself. He wasn't fat at all! Wonder of wonders! He wasn't fat and he could walk; not only walk, he could run.

Butterscotch Pie! Ugh! Was it worth it? he wondered, as he stood quickly to his feet, eyeing the house with great thoughtfulness. One bite of the forbidden fruit got Adam and Eve into bad trouble and a piece-and-a-half of butterscotch pie had started him downward in a big, bad way. He must do something about it. He felt badly to think he had called Gay a sissy. He knew all along that she was right -- they should have gone immediately to mother and confessed to her and asked her forgiveness for eating of the forbidden pie.

Ray rubbed his hands across his eyes, trying to reconstruct the dream and its meaning. Suddenly he realized that the big black thing that had scared him so miserably had been nothing but his shadow. That's what the Bible meant when it said, 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth.' That's what that verse meant! He had done wrong and knew it, and his conscience and heart kept telling him so and reminding him. Because of his sinfulness and wrongdoing, a thing so small as a shadow had scared him, chased him and, like the 'wicked' man, he had fled 'when no man pursued!' Oh, how wicked he was!

"Mother! Oh, Mother!" he exclaimed, running quickly into the kitchen. "Forgive me for being disobedient and eating the pie when you had told us not to touch it. Forgive me and please pray for me. I don't want to go to hell and be eternally lost. I'll never do it again. I want to know that Jesus forgives me and saves from all my sins," and he knelt by Mother's waiting knee. He could tell by the joy and look of peace on Gay's face that she had already told mother and made her peace with God. He wanted it and he would have it. No shadow would ever again scare him! No, Sir!

\* \* \* \* \*

September, 1968

Story 8  
INDIGO BUNTING

Lynette and Camilla raced happily across the lawn on their hobby-horses, trying desperately to keep ahead of tiny Rosalie who was quite a runner for as tiny as she was.

"We beat," Lynette shouted happily to Rosalie, who wasn't very far behind making the big tree before the other two girls did.

"Let's try again," Rosalie laughed good-naturedly, "and let me have your hobby-horse, Camilla."

"O.K. I'll trade with you for this race," the laughing Camilla agreed.

Halfway across the lawn Rosalie stopped suddenly, "Look!" she exclaimed in almost a whisper, at the same time pointing to the top of a corn stalk in the field adjacent to the lawn where the trio was playing.

"A bird again!" Lynette exclaimed with disgust. "Do you always notice every bird that flies across our yard? You certainly are a funny little girl. I'd never notice any of them if you didn't call my attention to them."

"I love birds," Rosalie said, quiet-like. "So do father and mother. Jesus must have loved them, too, for He mentions about the falling of a little sparrow and said He took note of each and every one that ever fell. Let's watch that bird over there." And she seated herself on the lawn where she was sure to be able to have a good view of the lovely little creature in the corn field.

Camilla settled herself close to her sister's side but Lynette sulked and pouted and started for the garage, mumbling, "I'm not going to play with you anymore. All you ever care about is birds, birds, birds."

"What are you grumbling about?" her mother asked, coming into the garage just then to get a spade to do some work in the garden.

"Rosalie always gets spellbound over birds. She and Camilla are watching another bird in the corn field and won't play with me."

"I'm sure they'll play after their curiosity is satisfied. Why not join them? You may learn something good by watching, too."

"Who cares about birds? Not I!" And she sauntered into the house, sullen faced and cross.

"Oh, Mother," Rosalie called softly, "do come and sit with Camilla and me and watch the beautiful bird. This one is quite different from any I have ever seen. See how gracefully he darts across the tops of the corn tassels! There he is now, on top of the mulberry tree . . . way up on the highest, swingiest little branch! See him?" And she pointed toward the tree top.

"I'll sit with you for awhile but my eyes aren't as good as yours, dear. I can see something on the tree top but I can't distinguish what color nor how large or small it is." And mother laughed softly.

"He's the prettiest blue blue I have ever seen. A real deep, deep blue. It's so deep his little body shines when he gets close enough to see. See? Here he comes again, right over the top of the corn tassels. See how he swoops low after something?"

Quite suddenly, the beautiful little shiny blue-feathered creature settled himself on the very top of a stalk of corn close to where the excited children and their mother sat and, raising his graceful little neck high toward the heavens, he sang loudly, lustily.

"Oh! Isn't he wonderful, Mother?" Rosalie asked, clasping her hands together and nearly crying for joy. "See his beautiful coat of blue! Isn't it the bluest blue you've ever seen? What is it? It's not an ordinary blue bird. He's different."

"That's an Indigo Bunting, dear," Mother said. "He's really quite a handsome little creature."

"He's a happy little soul, that's for sure," Camilla laughed, as she listened spellbound to his beautiful song of praise.

"Watch closely now, girls," Mother said, as the Indigo Bunting started out across the corn tops again. Every now and then he darted gracefully downward and just as quickly as he did so he was soaring upwards again. In a very little while he was back near the same corn stalk again, his head raised high and his throat warbling a sweet, sweet bird-song.

"Did you notice anything special about this bird?" Mother asked.

"Just that he's prettier than any bird I've ever seen before," Camilla replied.

"He sings a lot," Rosalie commented.

"It has to do with his song," Mother admitted. "Every time he gets a bite of food . . . for that's what he's doing when he flies out across the tall corn tops., catching bugs and insects he always stops long enough to light on the tree top or a corn stalk and sing. He's so thankful for food. It seems to me like he's giving thanks to his Heavenly Father Who said He provides for the fowls of the air and wouldn't let one single sparrow fall to the ground without His knowledge of its fall. He doesn't have a refrigerator full of good things to eat nor a cupboard stacked with those things he needs to keep his little body healthy and strong; yet he is thankful and grateful to the Lord for providing a mouthful at a time. Oh, how this should shame all of us!"

"Do you know something else?" the bright-eyed Rosalie said, "We could all sing more if we worried less! That dear little Indigo Bunting doesn't worry that God won't provide his food for him. He just takes it a bite at a time and is so happy for that one mouthful that he comes over near

us and sings! From now on I'm going to trust the Lord to help me when I have hard tests and examinations at school, and worry less. I'll be able to sing a lot more."

"Birds!" Lynette said, coming around the corner.

"You could learn a lot from this Bunting if you'd stop and listen, Lynette," Mother said to her crosslooking daughter.

"I'm glad we stopped long enough to watch and listen," Camilla laughed softly. "Mother, I'm going to be more and more like that Indigo Bunting. See if I'm not." And she ran to the garage to get a rake to help Mother in the garden, Rosalie right behind her.

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October, 1968

Story 9

### THE SPIDER AND THE WASP

"Loren. Oh, Loren," mother called through the open doorway to where she thought she had last seen her boy, "come here; I need some help."

Everything was total silence for so long that Mrs. Caller asked Janice to go find her brother "I can't lift this sofa alone," she exclaimed, "and I thought I'd finish cleaning before Daddy comes home from work."

Janice ran gleefully down the back porch steps, through the yard and down the winding pathway to the big fish pond. More likely than not she'd find her "bug-minded, bug-conscious" brother there he was a great one for studying and watching the life and habitat of both animals and plants . . . and insects, as well.

Sure enough! Just as she thought; she saw him sitting cross-legged on a grassy mound of dirt close to the pond's edge and his eyes seemed glued to some object. If he heard her approaching he never let on,

"Loren," she - called softly, "Mother's needing you to help lift the sofa. I think she wants it moved to another place in the living room before Daddy gets home from work."

"Sh! Sh!" the boy exclaimed, never once lifting his eyes to look in her direction. "Tell Mom to come here . . . quick.

"But, Loren, she wants you. She said ....."

"Tell her to come here, Sis. I'll help her after she sees this. Hurry!" and his eyes never once strayed from what they were watching.

Janice raced up the pathway and was soon back with mother by her side.

"You wanted me?" This had been a customary thing for the little mother who knew that her boy would have been to the house immediately under ordinary conditions, for he had been an obedient child. But he was majoring in entomology in school and availed himself of every opportunity that arose.

"Come close," he whispered, as Mother and Janice settled themselves by his side noiselessly. "See that gorgeous spider web? See how it glistens and shimmers in the sunlight? Now watch closely, There's a silly little wasp that's asking for trouble by hanging around that shimmering thing of beauty, too much. See! There he is again. And notice -- far back in the center of this gorgeous filigree web. What do you see?"

"A . . . a . . . an ugly looking spider." Janice gasped in a whisper.

"Do you see it, Mother?" and his arm encircled her shoulders and drew her close enough so she could have a good look.

"She's certainly big and ugly-looking, mother, stud softly, settling herself closer to her son.

"Oh, look! Look!" Janice suddenly screamed. "The wasp! It's caught in the spider's web! Free it, Loren. Please!"

Before any one could speak further, at the first touch of the wasp's body on the spider's web there was a grand, mad rush the spider threw a lasso, and before any member of the family could utter another word the spider was back safely out of reach, with one turn of the silken cord around the wasp's body, and ready for another rush . . . with the cord! Over and over, again and again, she rushed out and back, throwing the cord around the body, the legs, and the wings of her enemy. Here was the wasp with her swift wings and her poison dagger, now totally helpless . . . made so by a soft body and no wings nor poison daggers. A soft, soft, big gray spider!

The spider now went calmly to work and cut the wasp loose from the web. Then, without releasing the bonds that bound her wings, legs and body and rendered her totally helpless, she dragged the wasp off into the corner where she lived and killed her and sucked her dry.

"How dreadful!" Janice exclaimed, shuddering with horror.

"Do we have time to watch more, Mother?" Loren asked, "Or shall we go move the sofa and then come back?"

"Let's stay here a while longer, Loren. I want Janice to see the end of this."

After a time of feasting the trio saw the spider toss the empty suit of armor on to the grass beneath and settle back for another prey.

"Why was the wasp so silly?" Janice asked, perplexed. "She had every advantage."

"Every advantage but the silken cord. The subtle silken cord, which, fold by fold, tied her helpless, Dear." Mother said sadly. "I know some people who are just as foolish. In fact more foolish ... far, far more foolish than that wasp. They insist upon reading books and papers not to the glory of God and the uplifting of the soul and they stop in stores to get a peek at television, and they laugh and listen to stories that are not what they should be.

Janice blushed deeply and hung her head. "Who . . . who . . . told you?" she asked tearfully.

"Do these words sound familiar, dear? 'And be sure your sin shall find you out.' "

"I... I'm sorry, mother. I really am. I hated to do it but the girls made such fun of me until I finally gave in. Can...can... I be forgiven, Mother? Ever? Will God be merciful to me and forgive me? I...I... feel like I've been as foolish as the silly wasp. The spider of sin has been wrapping cord after silken cord around my soul and soon I would have been where the silly wasp is. Please pray for me, Mother and Loren."

There on the clump of grass, with gold-fish frolicking and cavorting in the pond, Janice prayed her way back to God. After peace had flooded her soul she looked sadly at the empty, dried-up carcass of the wasp and whispered softly, "Thank Thee, Jesus dearest, for unloosing sin's binding cords from around my soul. Almost, I was like that wasp! But I'm free, free, free, through the precious Blood of Jesus!"

Trudging happily up the pathway to the house, Mother whispered softly to her son, "Thanks for inviting us down. It was just what God could use to get to your sister's heart."

"I feel like I could remove a mountain now, Mother," Loren said, smiling through his tears of joy. "Just knowing that my sister's back in God's fold makes me feel strong. I can handle the sofa all by myself." And he ran into the house where he hurried to the living room and the sofa.

\* \* \* \* \*

November, 1968

## Story 10 PRISONER

Grandma was napping. Belinda was outside playing marbles with six-year old Chuck and Puss Purreal was curled up neatly in a yellow furry ball on the sill of the bay window in the living room, dreaming lazy little cat-dreams, when Chucky let out a loud squeal of glee and delight.

"I made it Belinda! I made it! I made the hole!"

Puss Purreal twitched his furry little ears in excitement and unwound his cuddly little body, then sat suddenly erect. What was that frightful scream that so disturbed his peaceful dreams! Well, no need to try to go back to sleep after that!

He sat suddenly upright and stretched himself the full length of his body. Looking through the spotlessly clean window he saw a fat robin as he pulled a long earthworm out of the lawn then flew happily away.

Grandma let out a loud snore and Puss Purreal looked with disgust at the sleeping old soul. He liked Grandma. Oh, yes, he liked Grandma! She was always so kind and stroked his little cat-back so gently, and fed him till he just couldn't possibly eat more. But he was disturbed from his sleep and he didn't like it that Grandma was sleeping so soundly and didn't talk to him.

He jumped down from the big wide window sill and started for the kitchen when he saw it. A sudden naughty thought filled Puss Purreal's mind and the longer he thought about it and looked upon the object his desire to do grew. Not for long did he hesitate. With his fat, yellow, right front paw he batted the ball of brightly colored yarn and sent it rolling across the living room floor.

Quickly he chased after it, jumping high in the air and arching his back gracefully 'ere he landed beside the pretty yarn. He gave it a gentle push, then rolled over and over, a strand of the soft stuff wrapping itself around his plump body. Oh, this was fun! He didn't need Grandma to talk to him nor Belinda and Chucky to play with him. No, Sir!

With all four paws kicking and pulling he unwound the single strand that had fastened itself about his body. Playfully he batted the ball again, sending it out into the dining room this time. Again he chased after it, doing all kinds of cat acrobatics as he went. With his fat little paw he hit it again, and again and again, rolling the ball of yarn from one end of the dining room into the living room and with each new hit it kept unwinding and was strung colorfully across the floor.

Puss Purreal did several graceful somersaults; then, with his back on the floor and all four paws kicking fiercely at the strands of yarn, he rolled over, first this way, then that. Oh, he was really having fun and there was nobody to stop him, either! This was the best time he had ever had! Over and over he rolled, kicking and playing with the yarn and over and over; he was getting more and more tangled in the soft wooly stuff. It was now covering most of his fat little stomach and was even binding his paws. He tried desperately to free himself but the harder he tried the more entangled he became, and the strands that seemed so soft and cuddly before seemed only to hurt and bind him now. How they did bind his fat little stomach! It hurt. He must do something, but what? He rolled over again and felt more bound than ever as another new strand was added.

"Meow. Meow!" he called. Grandma snored louder than ever and Belinda and Chucky laughed gleefully.

"Me-ow! Me-ow!" he wailed loudly, feeling every 'bit a prisoner.

Now Puss Purreal was a smart little cat. He came to Belinda as a gift from a friend and he had papers with him when he came, to prove just how smart he was (that's how he came to have his funny little name, too -- it was on the papers). Oh, yes, he was smart and not just an ordinary little cat! At least the papers said he wasn't just an ordinary cat, but Puss Purreal's papers just

couldn't help him one bit when it came to showing him how to escape from his funny tangled prison of yarn. No, Sir.

"M-e-o-w!" He wailed pitifully. "Puss Purreal!" Mother exclaimed, coming in from the grocery store and setting her armload of groceries on the table. "You naughty, naughty cat! Just see what you've done!"

See what he'd done! Is that all that mattered? Couldn't she see that he was a prisoner -- a yarn prisoner?

"Me-ow!" he pleaded, looking, hopefully at the woman of the house.

By now Belinda and Chucky stood in the dining room archway.

"What happened?" they asked simultaneously.

Poor Grandma, startled by all the loud noise and commotion, sat suddenly upright and tried desperately to wipe the sleep out of her tired old eyes.

"From the looks of things," Mother said softly, gently untangling the furry little cat, "Puss couldn't resist temptation. I had a feeling I should have put Grandma's afghan yarn in the knitting bucket before I left. Puss saw it lying where Grandmother dropped it and has had a really wonderful time with it . . . until he got tangled in it."

"Why, there's a wonderful lesson in this for all of us." Grandma's shaky voice began. "Temptation comes to each of us and, in itself, is not sin. But the moment we give consent to the temptation in our mind and heart, it then becomes sin. Puss saw, (apparently and positively so), he desired, and then he committed; and now he's a prisoner. And he'd have stayed a prisoner unless mother had come and seen his pitiful plight and freed him. My, my, my! What a mess he's in! This is exactly the way sin does. The devil makes sin look gay, bright and colorful -- a thing to be desired; and as the boy or girl, man or woman commits first one sin, then another and another, so the devil winds his fetters about the individual until they, like Puss Purreal, are all tangled and bound by sin's fetters. Finally, (maybe after years and years of living in sin and serving the devil) they try to free themselves but find that, like Puss, they just can't do it. That's when Jesus the Good Shepherd comes along and, by the poor human sin-prisoner confessing and forsaking his sins, the blessed Saviour washes his soul in His precious shed blood and forgives him all his sins and sets him absolutely and completely free from the fetters that had so bound him.

"Belinda and Chucky, stay as far away from sin (and anything that looks like sin) as possible. That way you'll not become enslaved and bound. Pray and ask Jesus to keep you always clean and pure and good and Holy."

"We will, dear Grandma," the children premised happily as Puss Purreal was suddenly freed and ran quickly away from the thing he had thought so beautiful, alluring and attractive only a few minutes before.

\* \* \* \* \*

December, 1968

Story 11

## THE CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Vanessa counted the plants on the window shelf then walked away, her face wreathed in a smile.

"What have you been doing, dear?"

It was her mother. "Counting." "Again?"

The dark-haired girl laughed softly. "I can hardly believe they're mine F' she exclaimed. Ten African violets and two Christmas Cactus! Imagine!" She gestured toward the window happily, with her hands.

"It is a good project for you, Vanessa, and your plants seem to have responded more beautifully to your 'green thumb' than for many people who are in this business all the time. I'm glad for you."

"I'll take cuttings from the violets then sell all these on the window. Ten violets and one Christmas Cactus should bring a few more dollars for us, Mother dear." "Maybe ....."

Vanessa looked toward her mother who never finished the sentence. She knew what Mother had been ready to say again "Maybe your father will have this sea-fever all out of his system and will come home to us to stay this Christmas." It had been the same every Christmas . . . looking, yearning and longing . . . until Vanessa never planned much anymore. At first her little heart would become all excited and elated with the thought that perhaps this Christmas her daddy would return and never, never again leave her and her mother, but each year was a mere repetition of the last. It hurt Vanessa's heart, most of all for her mother who was looking more and more tired and worn and whose eyes seemed not to glow and shine as they one time did. Could mother be worrying? she often wondered. She knew there hadn't been much income. Maybe that accounted for some of mother's worry.

As she lay in her bed one night listening to mother's tearful prayers and supplication, wondering what a little girl could do to help lighten the load, she thought of the African Violet old Mrs. Princeton had given her a month earlier. Why couldn't she raise and sell plants like Mrs. Princeton had done for so many, many years before she took her bed in sickness?

Early the following morning she began her new project, as mother had called it so fittingly. She felt sure that the Lord had helped her and shown her how to go about starting the little leaves, for never had anything grown more rapidly and rooted more easily. And that was something for a nine-year-old! (As her mother had praised).

The telephone on a nearby desk jangled loudly and Vanessa listened to her mother's anxious answers into the receiver.

"Honey," she said as she put the mouthpiece back on the hook, "I want you to run over to the Hufflebine's. Mrs. Hufflebine just said that Jessie had something awful come over him. She's nearly frantic and needs help. I'll be along as fast as this leg permits, but you get over there right away and try to calm the dear soul until I get there."

Vanessa grabbed her heavy shawl and ran quickly down the street to the Hufflebine house. She rapped ever so lightly, then stepped inside, realizing full well the old folks never heard her, for both Mr. and Mrs. Hufflebine were almost deaf and he was totally blind.

It seemed a shame to Vanessa that this dear old couple had no one to love them and look after them. They, like her mother and herself, had lived in a poorer (but clean) section of the town and, had it not been for Vanessa's mother, the old folks would have starved or frozen to death more than once.

The child, quite grown up for her years, went straight to the bedroom where Mrs. Hufflebine was trying to keep wet cloths on her irate husband's head.

"He won't keep them on!" she lamented loudly to the girl.

"Let me try. Maybe he'll feel differently about it since I'm here." Vanessa said.

And there was a difference immediately, for the instant old Mr. Hufflebine felt Vanessa's childish hand wipe the wet cloth across his fevered brow he sighed deeply and settled down to resting peacefully. Always, she had called the old man "Grandpa." How he thrilled to her childish prattling when he could hear and see! And now, when he was old and blind and almost deaf he found greater comfort and solace than ever in the child's touch.

"He loves you, dear little girl," and Mrs. Hufflebine was crying now. "We both love you and your good mother. God has put you here to watch over us now that we're old and helpless."

Vanessa's mother came in just then and took over some of the duties and began preparation of a badly needed meal, brought from her own meager supplies at home.

"Bathe Grandpa's head, Mother. I'll be right back," And away the child hurried.

She was back in a little while. Beneath her warm shawl she carried the prettiest blooming pink-red Christmas Cactus.

"Here, Grandpa and Grandma," she laughed. "I want you to have this. Whenever anybody gets sick and goes to the hospital or to bed they get a lovely plant from the flower shop. Since we're too poor to buy a plant I thought how pretty and cheery my Christmas Cactus would look setting on the stand next to Grandpa's bed."

"But . . ." and mother's eyes filled suddenly with tears. Tears of joy and pride and admiration for her little girl.

"I was going to sell it, mother dear, but I felt like Jesus would be so pleased if I'd give it." And she handed the plant to Mrs. Hufflebine, who cried for joy.

"Christmas is just a few days away and I want you and Grandpa to have it now . . . to look at before and after Christmas is over," Vanessa explained happily as the delighted old woman folded her tenderly to her bosom.

"I can sell my other one," the child confessed later to her mother, "or just keep it for you and me to enjoy. It's not blooming nearly so pretty as the one I gave to dear Grandpa and Grandma Hufflebine. Oh, Mother I feel so good inside since I gave what I could."

"And I am proud of my little girl. She has learned, a valuable lesson., the choicest blessings always come to the soul who minds God and is unselfish. Since it is almost Christmas time again I know of no better way you could have proven to the blessed Jesus that you love Him and are practicing unselfishness than by what you have just done. I feel He is smiling down upon you."

"It is more blessed to give than to receive," the child whispered happily up into her mother's sweet face.

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THE END