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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1972

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Digital Edition 09/09/2000
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Published in The Missionary Revivalist, January, 1972

Story 1

AND SASSY CROWED

Chucky looked at Sassy. Sassy surveyed Chucky with a critical eye, stout rebellion and over-much confidence--he did all this through his beady, black rooster eyes!

"You spur me again," Chucky said in a threatening tone of voice, "and I'll whack your saucy head a hard blow with this stick!" He raised the piece of stout stick high above his head and swung it menacingly towards Sassy.

The big white, heavy-set rooster, with his comb a healthy red, stood defiant and tall and strutted about proudly on his two straight legs, every now and again casting Chucky a look of challenge. Of fight!

"I only wish Daddy were here, Sassy: he'd have you on the run... short order!"

But Daddy wasn't anywhere near. Nor Mother, either. They had gone to the city to meet Grandma when her train got there from Mapletown. Grandma was coming to the farm ... to stay all summer

Chucky forgot all about Sassy at thought of dear Grandma's coming. He turned about quickly and thrust the stout stick into the ground ... exactly like old Brother Pumpernuss did when walking with his cane. How grand it was to feel all grown up and walk like Brother Pumpernuss! He walked straight and tall, leaning upon his cane when suddenly, without warning, Sassy was on him like a flash of lightning. In an instant, the stout walking stick was raised. It came down on Sassy with an astounding blow. The cocky rooster fell to the ground and lay still. Very, very still.

Chucky stood back and waited. In a little while Sassy would be up and back to his old tricks again, he thought. But the longer he waited the more convinced he was that something dreadful was wrong with Sassy.

"Sassy," he called, "can you hear me? Are you all right? I didn't mean to hurt you bad."

He waited. Still Sassy didn't move. Then he knew. Sassy was -- dead!

Sudden fear rose up inside him. What should he do? What could he do?

Running as fast as his eleven-year-old legs would carry him, he rushed into the tool shed and grabbed a shovel. Hurrying back to Sassy, he picked him up by his straight, yellow-stockinged legs and carried him down to the fence that separated the corn field from the meadow. He dug a deep hole, then dropped Sassy in, making sure every feather was stroked neatly back in place the way Sassy would have liked it (for was he not King of the Barnyard!); then he carefully shoveled dirt over the well-fed, plump body. He should plant a flower on top of the grave, he thought, his eyes filling with tears. But he hadn't meant to kill him. He hadn't!

All the way back to the tool shed his thoughts troubled him. He hadn't meant to kill Sassy. Not really. And in spite of the many floggings he had received from that saucy, vain and arrogant rooster, Chucky knew he would miss him. Why... (and a new thought popped into his mind and struck him with tremendous force) who would awaken them tomorrow morning? Ever since Sassy had learned how to crow, he had been the general alarm clock ... beginning, sometimes, at three-thirty in the morning!

Chucky felt sad and scared; but only until he saw Grandma come in the driveway. Then he forgot all about poor Sassy lying cold and stiff and dead in his grave along the fence. He felt happy now. Grandma had arrived! Grandma, with her bulky but interesting trunk that smelled sweet and delightfully fragrant with the scent of dried lavender and dainty little rose petal pillows made to go into the dresser drawer along with her handkerchiefs and undergarments and night clothes.

Chucky knew that, hidden somewhere in that enormous trunk, were books for him and his brothers and sisters; for Grandma never came without bringing good books of new and interesting places and things. Oh he loved Grandma! Not for the books and little gifts she brought, but because she was Grandma and always had lots and lots of time to tell them Bible stories and Stories of far-away places people and things.

As Father helped carry Grandma's luggage into the big farmhouse, Chucky heard him laugh. "Keep a sharp eye out for a certain saucy, sassy, fine looking rooster," he warned good naturedly. "He has remarkable speed and comes out of seeming nowhere. And you know it when he strikes!"

Chucky cringed. He had forgotten all about Sassy. What should he do, he wondered, tell Father and Mother or not tell them? His decision was quick and final: Unless Father asked him about Sassy, he would say nothing. Absolutely and positively nothing!

Things went along well at the big farmhouse until the next morning.

"Sassy's laying down on the job!" Buddy exclaimed at the breakfast table. "He didn't sound his rooster alarm this morning."

Father's fork paused in mid-air, a tasty morsel of sausage held securely in the tines. "Say, that's right! I didn't hear that sassy, proud little fellow this morning."

Mother laughed softly. "Little fellow, did you say?" she teased. "Big, would be better fitting. Sassy's quite a rooster. It looks like he has us all well trained though: We're having breakfast right on time."

Chucky looked at the big, old clock on the mantel. Its hands told him it was exactly half-past-six o'clock in the morning ... the same time they always ate breakfast.

He was glad when Robin asked Grandma if she slept well and the subject was changed to pleasanter things than Sassy.

But the following morning Sassy's absent crow became more noticeable than ever; and the days that followed, even more so.

"I'm just about sure Dick Brenheuser killed Sassy," Buddy accused at the dinner table some days later.

Chucky felt awful. Wicked, too. It wasn't right to let Buddy accuse an innocent person. Oh no! What should he do?

"If Dick killed him," Sandy piped up, "I'll hit Tippiie the next time he comes over here. I will."

Chucky gasped. A lump as hard as a stone came up in his throat. It nearly strangled him. Was he going to sit by and allow his brothers and sisters to accuse the innocent and treat them and their animals un-Christlike? Was he?

"I'd never have thought Dick would be that mean!" Scott exclaimed. "But Sassy sure did flog him a time or two and..."

"Rick didn't kill Sassy!" Chucky exclaimed suddenly, overjoyed to get the burden off his heart. "I.. I did it."

"You!" the family said in utter disbelief, shocked beyond words.

"I did it. I didn't mean to, either. Please, mother and father, forgive me and ..." In spite of wanting to be big like Buddy and Scott, Chucky found himself crying.

"It's quite all right, Son," father soothed, laying his hand on Chucky's head. "Why didn't you tell Mother or me? We could have had chicken pot pie or fried chicken; even baked rooster sounds good!"

"I was scared."

"But why should you be?" Mother asked. "Daddy and I always try to be fair with you children; and you certainly didn't deserve to be punished for this, Chucky. Not since Sassy has been so brutal and mean to all of us. We all know how frightfully mean he could be."

Chucky's arms wound quickly around Mother's neck. "But I'm truly sorry that I didn't confess it sooner. I did it the day you went to get Grandma; and every day since then, Sassy has been crowing ... day and night, night and day. I even hear him in my sleep. But now my heart feels light and good again."

"And you'll feel lighter still when once you've prayed about it, dear boy," Father said, leading the way in prayer.

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February, 1972

Story 2

NATHAN AND THE SKATES

"Nathan! Ho, Nathan! Let's go skating. Na-th-an!"

Nathan flung the door open wide and grinned at Barry. "You sure the ponds frozen thick enough?" he asked.

"Course it is!" Barry exclaimed. "At least Billy and Joe and Ted say it is. They've been down there most of the morning."

"I'll have to ask Father and Mother first," Nathan said, turning toward the kitchen where they were just finishing the noon meal.

"You sure the ice is thick enough for skating?" Nathan asked Barry again. "Dad's not sure about it."

Barry was growing impatient. "'Course it's thick enough," he said, almost shouting. "And I'm going whether you do or not."

"Don't go too far out," Mr. Corry told his son as he left the house. "Stick pretty close to the shoreline. Be thicker there."

"I sure will, Dad," Nathan called, waving a hand good-bye.

The boys hadn't been skating for long when Nathan noticed Terry Brown doing his best to skate ... on his shoes!

"Look at him!" Barry shouted to Ted and Joe as they skimmed gracefully across the shiny ice on their new skates. "Trying to skate on his shoes! Ha. Ha!" He laughed loud and long at Terry.

"Stop that!" Nathan said, skating up close to Barry. "It's sinful to make fun of people. Terry's folks are poor. The Bible says, 'He that mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker.' "

"See if I care what the Bible says!" Barry exclaimed, skating quickly away from Nathan, out toward the center of the pond.

Nathan felt like crying for Terry. He was sure Terry heard Barry's unkind remark. He couldn't help but hearing ... Barry had deliberately said it loudly enough so nearly everyone on the pond would hear

Nathan skimmed the ice almost like a bird in flight. He skated up close to Terry who was now headed for shore. "Hey Terry," he called out pleasantly, "wait a minute. How'd you like to use my skates?" And before Terry had time to protest, Nathan flung himself down on the bank of the pond and quickly unlaced his skates then held them out to Terry. "You must use them," he urged, getting into his shoes. "I want you to!"

Terry smiled gratefully down into Nathan's face. "Thanks," he said. "You're so kind!" That's when Nathan saw the sparkly tears gleaming in Terry's blue eyes.

Nathan swallowed hard, but he just couldn't seem to get rid of the big lump that was down in his throat. He was right! Yes, Sir 1 Barry had hurt Terry! Worse still, he had reproached the Lord Jesus ... for Terry was a Christian. He belonged to Jesus. And Nathan knew that when anyone did anything to hurt or wound or harm one of God's children, that person was doing it against the Lord! He shivered when he thought about it.

He bowed his head and prayed for Barry as Terry skimmed across the ice and away.

Nathan lifted his head and watched Terry. He was quite a skater. What fun Terry was having, skimming across the pond like he had wings on his feet. O, it was wonderful to be kind and compassionate with everybody. Nathan felt good and wonderful inside. He knew he had pleased Jesus very much by being kind.

Right in the middle of his pleasant thoughts, Nathan heard a loud crack, then a scream. He jumped to his feet. Barry was nowhere to be seen! Then he saw the boys all skating frantically toward the shore. All, that is, but Terry.

Barry! Where's Barry?" Nathan asked as Ted came up to the shore-line.

"He... he's drowned!" Ted nearly shouted it. He was so excited.

"The ice! It broke!" Bill shouted, skating up to where Nathan stood.

"But ... Barry! We must get help!" Nathan said. "He's not a Christian. He's not ready to die! If he drowns he'll go to hell!"

But Ted and Bill didn't seem to hear. They were too busy getting into their shoes and running away.

Nathan started up the hill toward the Miller home for help when he saw Terry skating carefully out toward the center of the pond, dragging a piece of wood behind him. He saw Barry then, too. He was trying desperately to grab hold of the edge of the ice only to have it break and give way.

"Pray, Barry! Hold on!" Terry was saying. "Hold on! I'm coming. I'll help you."

Flattening himself out on the ice, Terry began a slow crawl on his stomach ... nearer and nearer to the hole and the black-looking water. "Grab the stick, Barry" he called. "Get hold of the stick and hang on. The Lord will help us!"

Nathan waited to hear no more. He raced up the hill almost like the wind. Terry was brave; and he was doing just what a Christian would and should do. It was up to him, Nathan Corry, to get help. NOW!

Nathan was glad when he saw Mr. Miller all warmly dressed, out shoveling snow from the sidewalk. "Help, Mr. Miller! Help!" he called, waving his gloved hands towards the pond. "Help Barry's drowning! He's in the pond!"

Mr. Miller dug the shovel deep into a snow drift then hurried to the barn and got a rope. Holding the rope tightly in his hand, he raced down the hill with Nathan.

Nathan was glad that Mr. Miller wasn't as big and round and fat as Barry's father for he'd not have been able to run as fast as he did. Mr. Miller was a tall, slender built man whose legs seemed able to run as fast as a deer's. Nathan really had to run to keep up with him.

Very carefully, Mr. Miller inched his ways toward Terry and Barry, urging Barry to put the noose of the rope beneath his armpits.

Not until Barry was out of the water and safe in the Miller home did Nathan speak. "The Lord was good to you, Barry," he said. "You... you were almost..., lost!"

Barry, wrapped in thick, heavy blankets, shivered hard. "I ... I know, Nathan," he stammered. "But ... out there in the water .. I ... prayed. I asked the Lord Jesus to forgive me of all my sins and to save me, and ... He did. I ...I'd have drowned if it hadn't been for Terry and you! All the other boys ran away and left me. You and Terry, well, you..., you're different; and ... and now I'm different too."

Big salty but happy tears bubbled out of Nathan and Terry's eyes. It was wonderful..., to have another Christian soldier in fourth grade, Nathan thought happily as he started for home.

* * * * *

March, 1972

Story 3

HIS LITTLE HELPERS

"My, I do wish you and I could do something wonderful for Jesus, Dee Dee," Tammy said, looking at her sister as they sat on the front porch steps. "Big people always have so many nice and big things they can do; but children, well..."

"Maybe Jesus isn't looking just for big things, Tammy," Dee Dee said thoughtfully. "The little boy who gave Jesus his five loaves and two small fishes didn't do anything really so big."

"But Jesus made it big and great!" Tammy exclaimed. "And won-der-ful I wish we could give Jesus something like that. Why, He'd smile on us and bless us, too."

Dee Dee was silent for a long, long time. She sat with her face cupped in her hands, her long honey-blond hair blowing in soft wavelets around her face. How wonderful it would be to do something that great and wonderful for Jesus, she thought.

Suddenly, from the back yard, the girls heard a scream, then loud cries for help..

"It's Rocky!" Tammy exclaimed, jumping up from the porch steps and running around the side of the house to the back yard.

"And Chucky, too!" Dee Dee shouted. "They're in trouble!" And she quickly followed her sister.

"Chucky! Chucky!" she called as she stopped near the big tree, where she saw her brother's leg wedged soundly and firmly in the forks of the tree. "Why did you go up there?" she asked. "Father and mother told you not to do so."

"Help! Help me!" Chucky's cries came out painfully.

"Bub-ber!" Rocky's tiny, full, round face, all tear-stained, pleaded pitifully with his older sisters. "Bub-ber . . . hurt!"

Tammy reached down and scooped her baby brother up in her arms, cooing into his tiny ear as she did so, "Dee Dee will get brother down. Just you wait and see! Sissy will help brother. See? She has him free already. There! He's down . . . and safe!"

Rocky wiggled out of his sister's arms and toddled over to where Chucky was seated on the ground, rubbing his ankle bone. He looked on as Dee Dee scolded softly, "And you must never,

never climb into that tree again, Chucky! You disobeyed, and all disobedience is sin! You know where the sinner goes"

Chucky's tears came full force again as Dee Dee finished. "Maybe you and . . . and Tammy could pray for me," he said. "I don't want to go to hell I don't want to be lost forever. But that's what I'll do unless I repent and . . . and get forgiven for my disobedience."

Beneath the big tree, the girls and Rocky wept and prayed with Chucky until he knew the blessed Lord Jesus had forgiven him of his sins.

"Now we're all going into the house," Dee Dee said. "Chucky, you and Rocky can play with your farm animals and the little tractor; that way you'll not get wedged into any more trees."

"Let's wash the dinner dishes and surprise mother when she gets home from the grocery store," Tammy suggested.

"O let's do!" Dee Dee exclaimed joyfully. "And we'll sweep the floor and dust the furniture"

"And maybe we can even get Rocky to take his nap!" Tammy said, her dark eyes shining bright with eager anticipation.

The girls worked feverishly, their long hair growing damp with perspiration. Soon the house was all tidy and shiny-clean.

"Now to get Rocky to sleep!" Tammy exclaimed, washing her hands and smiling into her sister's face.

"I'm going to peel potatoes for supper while you rock brother," Dee Dee said.

"Mother will be so surprised and pleased!" Tammy said, laughing softly as she took Rocky into her arms and headed for the big rocking chair in the living room.

A short time later, mother came in from the grocery store. How very tired she looked, the girls thought, as they met her at the door.

"You must go and rest awhile, Mother!" both girls said. "We'll put the groceries away."

"I must clean the house and see that Rocky gets his nap," Mother began softly. Then seeing the dishes all washed and dried and put away and the house spic and span and spotlessly clean, happy tears filled her eyes. Grateful tears, they were. Lovingly she gathered Tammy and Dee Dee into her dear mother arms.

"Oh what wonderful, wonderful girls the Lord gave me!" she exclaimed softly. "You have everything in excellent condition. The Lord will reward and repay you richly for being so thoughtful and considerate and kind to your father and me. God is much pleased with my girls!"

"Oh Mother, we enjoyed doing it for you. We did it because we love you!" the girls said happily.

"And that makes it even more wonderful!" mother said. "Anything we do because of love's promptings is always truly enjoyable and delightful and the Lord takes especial notice of this. The little boy who gave Jesus his fishes and little bit of bread, gave them willingly and out of the love that was in his heart. And you know how very much Jesus blessed what he gave Him. In some special way, I believe the little boy received a blessing all his own from Jesus; for anything we give to Jesus and do for Him, is surely blest!"

Tammy and Dee Dee looked at each other and smiled..

"We love you, Mother dear," they said. "Run along now, and try to rest while Rocky's sleeping. We'll put the groceries away."

Removing the groceries from their sacks and putting the things away, Tammy said thoughtfully, "And to think that I thought we'd have to do something big and great and wonderful for Jesus before it would amount to anything!"

"Me, too!" Dee Dee exclaimed. "And all Jesus wants is for us to do the little everyday things of life"

"Like taking care of Rocky whenever we can and helping with the dishes and the housework," Tammy added.

"You know what, Tammy?" "No What?"

"I'm beginning to wonder if Jesus won't bless what you and I did for mother today like He blessed those loaves and fishes. I feel all good and blessed inside already!"

"Me, too! And I'm not going to wish for something great and big and outstanding to do for Jesus until I get finished doing all the little things I can do for others, through Jesus. He said something about giving something so small as a cup of cold water in His name! So if we do all that we must do, in His name, I'm sure He will bless it!"

Dee Dee smiled contentedly. Home was a wonderful place in which to begin working for Jesus!

* * * * *

April, 1972

Story 4
THE LORD'S ARMY

"Left, right! Left, right! Left, right! Halt," and the little army of marching men stood rigidly erect at Jimmy's command.

"Forward march!" he ordered again and, as Benny's big drum boomed loudly and noisily, the group proceeded to march down the street in perfect step and unison.

"About face!" Once more their captain shouted, then very softly he said, "Know something? I believe we're the best trained soldiers in this block," whereupon the serious minded boys broke rank and began loud chatter as they lovingly patted Jimmy and Benny on their shoulders.

"We have the best captain in the world," Charles said.

"And the best drummer boy," George continued.

"Let's ask Mother for some lemonade," Jimmy said, changing the subject and running toward the big white house near the other end of the block.

"I'm thirsty," his voice floated after the racing troop of boys.

"Lemonade! Yum! Yum!" Stevie said. "Jimmy's mother makes the best in the world!"

"And cookies, too!" Jan said breathlessly. For a long time the soldiers sat beneath the big maple trees on Jimmy's lawn, sipping ice cold lemon and orange-ade and munching on cookies.

"Know what?" Stevie asked, breaking the silence, "I'm just too hot to do any more marching."

"It wouldn't be you're too full?" his brother teased.

"Maybe so, Jan," Stevie said, "but I'm just too hot. Look at the perspiration dripping from my chin! Whew!" And he stretched his lanky legs out on the soft carpet of grass as he continued,

"That breeze surely feels good! Believe I'll take a little nap," and he closed his eyes sleepily.

Charles, with some ice still making a tinkling sound in his glass, tiptoed softly over to the tired boy and emptied the contents of his glass in Stevie's face. Instantly the sleeper was on his feet, stuttering and sputtering. "Some pals you are!" he laughed as he chased the black haired Charles up a tree, then headed homeward to wash the sticky lemonade from his hair and face.

"See you later," he called to his pals.

Just then Arthur rode by on his new shiny red bicycle. "Hi, fellows," he called, bringing his bike to an abrupt stop. "What you doin'?" he asked.

"Resting, as you can plainly see," George and Jimmy said.

"Isn't that kinda' boring?" Arthur asked.

"Not when you're tired," Benny laughed. "We've been marching 'most all day."

"Well, why don't you do something different?" Arthur questioned.

"Like what?" Charles asked, coming down out of the tree.

"Oh, like going to the movies with me," Arthur said.

"Movies?" Jimmy and Benny said in utter astonishment. "You know we don't go to such places, Arthur."

"I know! I know!" the boy exclaimed loudly. "But this ones different. It's something on the Bible, they say, and Mother said I may go since it's a scriptural picture."

"Arthur!" Jimmy said, rising to his feet and standing straight as an arrow. "You can't mean it! You're not going.

"But I am, Jimmy! Mother and father said I could go. Who's going with me? They say it's wonderful! It's not all Bible, just parts of it; and there'll be a cartoon or two and... and"

"I'll go," George said quickly. "Me, too," Charles said. "After all, if it's about the Bible it can't be wrong."

"I thought you were all soldiers," Jimmy said.

"We are, Captain," and immediately their hands went to their foreheads in salute.

"No, you're not!" Jimmy said hoarsely. "That is, not soldiers. in Jesus' army.

"Oh, Jimmy, don't be so much like a preacher; or so . . . so . . . old fashioned. We're living in a different day than when your folks were growing up," Arthur said defensively; then, calling to the boys he said, "Well, who's going with me? I'm going now, so hop aboard." And George and Charles both jumped aboard the bike, one on the handle bars, the other on the back.

As they turned the corner, Jimmy said, "Benny, surely you wouldn't have gone! You watch the bike and Arthur with such a longing look in your eyes. Would you?" and he looked his pal full in the face.

"I... well, er... I.. that is," Benny stuttered.

"That's all right, Ben. It's just as much a sin to want to go as if you had gone. Paul, the Apostle said in the 16th Chapter of 1st Corinthians, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.' I'm disappointed in my soldiers!" Jimmy said sadly. "If we can't stand up for Christ when we're put on the spot -- so speaking -- we're not even worthy of Him. God wants soldiers whom He can depend upon; soldiers who will watch and soldiers who will stand fast in the faith and not give in by going to a seemingly religious picture or so-called 'harmless' picture. Do you go to the garbage can for your supper, Benny?"

"No," he answered softly.

"Do you suppose the Lord is pleased to have His so-called 'children' running to an unholy, ungodly movie show to learn about Jesus when everything we need to know is placed right in our Bibles? Do you, Benny?"

"I guess you're right, Jim, and I'm proud of you as our captain," Benny said resolutely.

"Just think of it! Those people who try to act out the picture are drunkards, dope addicts and very, very wicked people who smoke, curse and do all kinds of evil things! God wants soldiers whom He can depend upon to stand up for Him and for His cause and who will stand up like men and be strong. God's army is a great army! God's soldiers will be many times shot at and be spitefully used and mistreated, but if they're in the Lord's army and are wholly God's, they keep their eyes on their victorious Captain, knowing that He will lead them triumphantly Home to Heaven. I'm in this army and I'd like you boys to fall in line, too," Jimmy said pleadingly.

"I . . . I'm sorry, Jim," Benny said brokenly. "I really want to be in the Lord's army with all my heart."

"Let's pray now," Jimmy said, leading the way to the mercy throne in prayer.

A golden sunbeam peeked through the branches of the maple tree and kissed Benny on his tear stained cheeks just as Jesus saved him.

"I . . . I . . . feel good all over, Jimmy, and so warm in my heart. You're a great captain, Jim, the best in the world," he added, hugging his pal.

* * * * *

May, 1972

Story 5
BILLY'S PRESENT

"Grandma. O grandma, where are you?" A familiar voice called through the screen door at the same time a tiny turned up nose was pressed tightly against the screen, making waffle patterns

and impressions upon the little boy's fair face and nose. "Grandma!" he called again. "I'm here." He dare not knock lest his secret be revealed!
"Grand-ma-a!"

Then he heard the steps for which he had been waiting and his merry laughter filled the porch and the entire house.

"Why, Billy darling; what brings you to grandma's house so early in the morning?" grandma asked, unhooking the screen and opening the door for the laughing boy.

"I brought you something, Grandma!" Billy exclaimed, his eyes bright with childish excitement.

"Well now, how very sweet of you!" Grandma stooped to gather the boy into her arms, but Billy backed away.

"No, Grandma, you hurt them. You hurt my present!"

"A present? For grandmother, Billy? Where is it? Give it to me. I will close my eyes and hold out my hands. . "

O this was a wonderful game! Laughing gleefully and joyously, Billy laid his present in grandma's outstretched hands "Here's your present, Grandma!" he exclaimed, clapping his dear little hands together for joy. "Oh-h-h aren't they be-au-ti-ful!"

Grandma opened her eyes wide "They . . . they are beautiful, Billy. They're very, very beautiful, and grandmother loves them, but, dear little boy, you should not have picked these."

Billy's face clouded instantly; his eyes lost their merry twinkle and sparkle and his shoulders drooped.

Laying the flowers on the table, grandma hurried back to her grandson and folded him gently but tightly to her bosom.

"I told you it's wrong to steal, Billy. Remember? Even Jesus is grieved with grandma's little sweetheart. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal."

"But I wanted the flowers for you, Grandma! Jesus knows that. They are so be-au-ti-ful . . . just like you!"

"O Billy, grandma loves you so much; but you must never, never steal! Not for anybody Not even grandmother. We break one of God's commandments when we take anything that doesn't belong to us; and if we break one of His commandments, we sin. You know that no sin can enter heaven, Billy dear."

"But I didn't mean to sin," the boy said, crying "I just wanted the flowers for you"

"And that was sweet of you.. wanting flowers for grandmother. But you want to go to heaven, don't you, Billy?"

"Yes, Grandma. O yes! You'll be in heaven; and I want to be where Jesus is and where mama and daddy and you are!"

"Then we'll have to do something about these tulips."

"But, Grandma," Billy wailed, "Mrs. Kellogg didn't see me pick them. She won't know who got them. I left good and early so I could pick them before she was awake and up and would see me"

Billy suddenly hung his head in shame. He hadn't meant to tell grandma everything and now . . . now he told her every bit of his secret. Even the things that he was going to keep only in his heart! And he felt wicked over it, too. He knew grandma was right He shouldn't have picked Mrs. Kellogg's flowers. But they were so bright and pretty and so-o-o tempting!

"God saw you pick these lovely tulips, Billy dear; and we must do something about them. You must pay for them and make this right with dear Mrs. Kellogg. If grandma let you get by with this sin and didn't do something to punish you for it, you'd soon be committing another sin; perhaps even bigger and greater than this one!"

"What are you going to do?" Billy asked suddenly, feeling ready and willing to do anything grandma asked him to do.

"You will do it, Billy! You must take these flowers over to Mrs. Kellogg and tell her that you picked them . . . that you stole them. Then tell her you are sorry and ask her to forgive you for doing such a wicked and sinful thing."

Billy swallowed hard. "Can't . . . you do it, Grandma? I . . . I'm scared!'"

"No, little one, grandma can't do it for you. It wouldn't be God's way. You stole the flowers, you must confess the wicked deed to Mrs. Kellogg and ask her forgiveness."

"But, Grandma, I . . . I'll never do it again. I promise. Don't make me do it!"

"There goes Mrs. Kellogg now. She's going to the tulip bed. Go,; Billy, and tell her. Take these beautiful flowers back to her."

Slowly the little figure started down the back porch steps toward: the neighbor woman's house that separated his grandmother's house from his father and mother's. His steps felt like lead and his heart condemned him with every step he took. By the time he reached Mrs. Kellogg, he was crying. "Here," he said brokenly, "here, Mrs. Kellogg. I . . . I stole your beautiful flowers to give to grandma; but I'm sorry I did it. O I am sorry! Please forgive me. I'll never do it again!"

"Why, Billy, of course you're forgiven!" the neighbor said, taking the flowers out of the small fists. "But come inside and have breakfast with me. I haven't eaten my breakfast yet."

"Thank you," Billy said, "but I want to go back to grandma's. I . . . I want to get saved, Mrs. Kellogg. I stole and I broke God's heart and grandma's. I want Jesus to forgive me and give me a heart like grandma has . . . one all new and holy. I'll be back some other time," and away he hurried, to grandma and her knees, where he prayed until Jesus came into his heart and forgave him of every sin.

"Now perhaps we had better eat breakfast," grandma said, wiping the tears from the happy little eyes.

O how good grandma's breakfast tasted. "I believe it tastes especially good because I got my heart all fixed up with God and Mrs. Kellogg!" he said happily.

"Always remember that it's sinful to take anything that doesn't belong to you, Billy."
"Even a penny, Grandma?" "Yes, even a penny or a pencil or a tablet or anything that doesn't belong to you!"

"I'll pray every day, Grandma, until I'm sanctified wholly like you, and I know Jesus will help me."

"Grandmother's little sweetheart will be an overcomer!" grandma said, kissing the tip of Billy's upturned nose where the screen door's waffle designs of soil still lingered.

* * * * *

June, 1972

Story 6

THE SICK BLACKBIRD

"Bobby, come quick! Come here! Blackie ate some of that poison daddy put out to kill the rats. Shoo, Blackie! SHOO! You'll die! O-oh-h Bobby, whatever will we do?" Sarah was in tears.

"I don't know what we can do," Bobby answered, running up, breathless, to Sarah's side. "Ohh-h poor, poor Blackie! You can't even walk straight anymore," he moaned, watching the tottering, reeling blackbird. Turning to his sister, he said sadly, "Sarah, it looks . . . it looks as if we can't do anything anymore"

At that, Sarah flew immediately into action Running down the garden path toward the kitchen door, her long golden, wheat-colored hair flying askew in the warm summer breeze, she shouted, "Mother! Mother! Blackie's sick! He's dying! I know he is. He acts tottery and funny and"

"Blackie! Where is he, honey?" "He . . . he's out near the pig pen and.., and he's sick, Mother. He ate . . . poison!"

"And didn't your father and I warn you not to open the cage door while daddy set the poison for the rats?"

Sarah's head went down on her chest "But . . . he doesn't enjoy being caged up all the time," the girl lamented. "He needs some freedom. How will his wing ever heal or get exercise? Besides, I wanted him to find food for himself today. Oh-h Mother, do something! Please! We can't let Blackie die! We can't!

"There's nothing we can do, Sarah; not if he got into the forbidden poison."

"Oh, but we must do something, Mother! We must! Why Bobby and I've had Blackie ever since he fell out of the nest and got a crippled wing. He's a part of our lives. Let's make him throw up or . . . or . . . pump his stomach like they did to Lou Ann when she swallowed something she wasn't supposed to have swallowed. I'll go and get Blackie. You get ready to pump his stomach" and the excited little girl ran frantically toward the barn and pig pen where the ailing blackbird was.

"I can't pump his stomach, Sarah," mother was saying, but her words were heard only by the breeze, a cardinal on the japonica bush and a robin sitting on her nest in the blue spruce tree on the lawn.

In a very little while Sarah was back, carrying the dead blackbird Bobby walked solemnly by his sister's side. "He... he's dead, Mother. Blackie's dead!" Sarah wailed. "O Bobby, why did I open the door to his cage today? Why? Oh-h-h! My poor, poor Blackie!"

"Sarah, listen to me," mother said, drawing the girl close to her. "Blackie was only a blackbird. You must not carry on like this."

"But we loved him, Mother! Bobby and I loved Blackie. We practically raised him. He was a part of our lives"

"And he could still be a part of your lives, dear, if you had not disobeyed, Sarah Jane."

"But I got tired of carting food to him all the time. It was time for him to get out and look for his own dinner."

"Well, he found it all right. The thing that was most easily obtained.., poison! And that thing was his downfall Sit down, both of you, while I tell you something"

Obediently the children sat on the porch with mother. Sarah put the dead blackbird beside her on the floor

"First of all," mother began, "you must bury Blackie. Nothing must eat him, lest it, too, becomes poisoned and die. Then I want both of you to scrub your hands well . . . with plenty of soap and water. Meanwhile, don't touch your hands to your mouth. I don't particularly care for either of you handling anything dead. Is this clear?"

The children nodded soberly at their mother.

"Now listen, children. Blackie is dead proof that when anything with deadly poison in it is eaten, it kills. Right?"

"Wh . . . why . . . yes," Bobby agreed, having a feeling that he knew what mother was coming to.

"Just so with the soul that sins," mother continued. "We cannot sin, ever, without paying a price for it. A dreadful price! The Bible says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' For one to continue in sin when the blessed Spirit has pleaded with him to turn from his sins to the Lord Jesus Christ, well, this will mean death eventually. Or maybe even quite suddenly! Sin darkens the mind and blights and damns the soul. The Bible says, 'Sin when it hath finished bringeth forth death.' Blackie ate his fill of the poisoned food, I'm sure, and it did its deadly work. Just so with sin. One of the Ten Commandments says, 'Children obey your parents'"

"Oh, Mother, don't say any more. I see it!" Sarah cried into the skirt of her dress. "I've been a very disobedient girl and I . . . my sin., killed Blackie! And... and, Mother, I . . . I didn't dust Bobby's or my bedroom like you told me to do; nor sweep the porch .. Oh, Mother! I'm sorry! Please forgive me! I don't want the wages of sin. I want to be saved and go to heaven with daddy and you and Baby Sue. I do!"

"Me, too!" Bobby sobbed, throwing his arms about his mother's neck. "I need Jesus, too. I heard Harold Hill say a bad word and... and... I used it once too.., when I got cross at Snowball. She swished her tail in my eyes while I was milking her. It made me angry and I . . . I tried Harold's poison.., his bad word. O Mother, I want Jesus to forgive me and give me a new heart Pray for me, please!"

Kneeling by the porch swing, Sarah on one side and Bobby on the other, mother prayed for and with her children. Together, they prayed and wept and confessed their sins until both children knew that Jesus had sweetly forgiven them and saved them.

As they buried Blackie in a shoebox-casket, Sarah Jane said emphatically, "Know what, Bobby? I'm going to pray and pray until I'm sanctified wholly, God keeps mother and father sweet and kind and good and He can keep you and me if we get sanctified, too."

Bobby looked down at his sister, who was planting a stalk of wild geraniums On Blackie's grave, and said, Why, Sarah Jane, you're right! If He can keep big people living like mother and father do, I'm sure Jesus can keep us too. We'll get it, Sarah We'll get sanctified now.., just like father and mother. We will!"

"And we shall live good, holy and obedient lives, Bobby."

"We sure will, Sarah Jane!" Bobby exclaimed, plunging a marker into the soft earth.

* * * * *

July, 1972

Story 7

BROKEN CORN

"Say, that's a dandy bike you fixed up, Andy. Did you do it by yourself?" Kenny asked, straddling the bike and getting the feel of the pedal on his foot. "It's a real dandy!" he exclaimed again. "Like to ride it?" Andy asked.

"Would I ever!" Kenny gave a loud, high-pitched whistle.

"Go ahead, then. Take it down the road and see how nice it runs."

Without further coaxing or prodding, Kenny was on his way. He liked the feel of the wind in his hair and on his face and he liked the feel of the pedals beneath his feet, too. This sure was some bicycle.

"Like it?" Andy asked, when Kenny braked to a halt in front of him.

"I guess I do! Smoothest riding bike I was ever on."

"I know what we'll do," Andy said, his eyes aglow, "we'll fix you one, too. Yours is beat up and old and worn and ..."

"Great idea, Andy! We can fix my old one up just like you did this one. I'll paint mine red. I like red."

For many days the boys worked together on Kenny's bike and one day it was finished, running smoothly and ... painted red. A fire truck red! It was a sure enough beauty and Kenny thought it was the finest bike he ever did see.

"Let's go for a ride," he suggested one day. "I believe mine rides as smooth as yours, Andy."

"I know it does," Andy asserted.

"Your dad sure was wonderful to help us when we got stuck," Kenny said, already astride the shiny bike.

"My dad's a wonderful father," Andy said, taking off at a slow, steady pace after Kenny.

On and on the boys pedaled, down the road and up the road. Back and forth. Back and forth.

"Let's go over to the hollow, Andy. I like that stretch. It's cool there and I know a big shady tree that we can rest under. It's right next to Mr. Rothe's cornfield, too. We'll be kind of fenced in."

"I like the hollow, too," Andy said, pedaling faster.

Oh it was fun to ride a bicycle. The warm summer breeze tickled Andy and Kenny's faces and played a game called "Tangle" with their hair. They didn't even notice though.

"Well, here we are," Kenny laughed.

"Let's rest in the shade a little while," Andy suggested.

The boys drew up in the shade and talked and laughed. "See that tall corn?" Andy asked. "I guess I do! I have good eyes!" and Kenny laughed heartily.

"Watch what I can do!" Andy exclaimed, riding his bike between two tall tasseled stalks of corn right into the field.

"And here I come!" Kenny shouted, as his bike took off between two other tall stalks.

"Look out!" Andy shouted. "We're breaking Mr. Rothe's corn! Those first two were easy enough to get between but look what we're doing in here!"

"It won't matter, Andy. Mr. Rothe will never notice and who's going to tell on us? There's not a soul around here but you and me."

"And God, Kenny!"

"Aw, C'mon, Andy. Don't be a killjoy. This is fun. Let's pretend we're in a big forest. Here I go!"

Kenny rode up and down the long rows of corn, thrilled with excitement. Andy followed.

The tall corn reached out long warning fingers ... green blade warning fingers ... that brushed their faces and rustled loudly as though begging the boys to leave.

"This is great!" Andy shouted as Kenny zig-zagged between several more stalks of corn and headed for another row farther to his right. It was a sort of hide-and-go -seek game.

"We must do this again some day," he said finally, "but for now I'd better be getting home."

Heading toward the big tree, zig-zagging between the corn, Kenny's bike skidded. He fell and landed in the corn, crushing many of the stalks to the ground with him.

Andy, too busy steering his own bike in the giddy, zig-zag fashion, toppled right over Kenny and by the time they had picked themselves up and straightened their bikes, a wide area of the once beautiful corn was thrashed to the ground.

"Let's get out of here!" Andy said, heading his bike for the tree.

They drove straight home ... not a bit of lingering.

That evening a knock sounded on Andy's door. He hurried to open it.

"Good evening," Mr. Rothe greeted. "I'd like to know who broke my corn. It's thrashed to the ground in certain places."

Andy worked hard at trying to swallow the big lump that filled his throat so suddenly.

"Did you do it?" Mr. Rothe asked, looking Andy in the eye. "I ... I ... it was Kenny."

"I saw the bicycle tracks," Mr. Rothe said. "Thanks. I'll go and see your friend."

"Son," Andy's father probed, after Mr. Rothe had gone, "are you sure you didn't help to do it? You were with Kenny today. If you're guilty your sin will find you out. Never forget it." Andy gulped again.

"Oh father, I am guilty," he confessed, making a full and complete confession of everything that had happened.

"I feel wretched for lying! Why, I never told a willful and deliberate lie before in my life. It scares me, father..."

"Let's pray, Andy. You need to be converted -- Saved from your sins. Without having this done you can never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Repentant and contrite of heart, Andy knelt by his father and confessed his sins to God. He prayed until heaven's glory filled his soul and until he knew he was converted. He was a born again Christian! It was wonderful.

"I'll be back, Dad ... after I confess everything to Mr. Rothe and tell him that I lied, too."

* * * * *

August, 1972

Story 8

THE NAUGHTY BEARS

"Danny, wake up! Quick!" Mrs. Clark shook her son soundly. "Hurry! There's a bear outside and she has twin cubs with her!"

"Huh?" Danny sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes hard, trying desperately to rub the sleep from them, The bear! Mother had said the bear was back. And she had twins with her! With a single bound he was out of bed and soon sitting beside mother in front of the cabin window that overlooked a cool, swift stream. In front of the window a slender and tall lodgepole pine grew. Its lofty branches reached toward the sky, now glittering with myriads of stars

"I hear her!" Danny whispered in excitement. "She's turning the garbage cans over" He laughed in a subdued way.

"Wait till you see her!" mother warned "She's enormous. I saw her and her cubs."

"Here they come!" Danny said, moving farther back into the shadows of the dark room. Whew! She is big! Hey, she's stopping! Outside our window!"

"Sh-h. Don't move. She can smell us, I'm sure; but she won't bother us"

"I sure hope she doesn't! Say, those cubs are beauties! Round and plump as butter balls. They look naughty and mischievous."

"O they are. Just as children sometimes are, Dan. The Bible says, 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction driveth it far from him.'"

Danny was silent. He knew how effective the rod of correction was upon him!

"See how Mother Bear always sees to it that her babies are fed first?" Mrs. Clark commented as they watched the mother overturn the garbage cans and pull the garbage out with her big strong paw before scattering it about for her offspring.

"She's a good mother!" Danny admitted.

Mrs. Clark laughed softly "I'm afraid the park manager would disagree with you and me on that score, Son. He'd say she was 'bad.' They don't like litter in the park. It is unsightly, I must confess, but I do enjoy watching this . . . this dinner of the bears on garbage!"

"And sometimes it's more than garbage, Mother! Only last night, a big bear got the food off the Dunway's picnic table Jim and Alan and Joy ran screaming through the woods."

"They can be dangerous," mother warned, as the big brown-black bear disappeared around the side of the cabin The twins followed but were soon back in front of the Clark's cabin.

"The cubs! They're back, Mother!" Danny exclaimed in excitement. "And see, they're climbing our pine tree out front! O but they're cute; and so quick!" Danny's face pressed the window tightly as he watched the cubs rapidly disappear up the straight tree and into the night. "I wonder what Mother Bear will do now!" he said at last.

"She'll be after them, Danny. Let's watch and see what happens."

For a long time both mother and son sat in darkness inside the cabin window, waiting and watching. Up the tree, everything was perfect stillness and quietness, like the sky, the heavens and the stars. For a brief moment Danny wished he were sitting up there somewhere in that tree with those cute little cubs, stroking their thick coats of fur and loving them and watching the stars, as he was sure they were doing that very moment. Then he heard a noise. It was a frightful noise.

"She's coming, Danny!" mother whispered close to his ear. "Mother Bear has come back! And she doesn't sound the least bit happy either!"

"I hear her grunting, Mother. She seems to be angry I wonder if she'll find those naughty cubs!"

Before either could say more, Mother Bear was standing on her hind legs in front of the very window through which Danny and his mother were looking and watching. She looked first this way then that way; then for a brief while she seemed to be staring through the window right into Danny's face. Cold shivers raced up and down his spine, tingling him all the way through with excitement. "Whew!" he whispered, hardly moving a muscle even, "She's big! BIG!"

"I'd hate to have her any closer or nearer!" Mrs. Clark commented in a subdued whisper.

Giving a loud pig-like grunt Mother Bear grasped hold of the trunk of the pine and with great speed climbed upwards.

For a long while, save for the soft murmur of the cold mountain stream, everything was again deathly silent and still. Sitting vigil inside the window, Danny suddenly exclaimed to his mother, "They're coming down! I can hear them, Mother. Here they come!" And there, sure enough, before their very eyes, came the naughty little cubs, shinnying down that lodgepole pine as fast or faster than when they went up into it. Behind them? You've guessed it! Mother Bear!

Once on the ground, Mother Bear took her great strong paw, and grunting angrily, she spanked each naughty little cub soundly. Giving them a stern and meaningful look, she turned and led the way toward other cabins and still other garbage cans. Spanked and subdued, the cubs followed obediently at her heel. Soon all three bears were swallowed up in the darkness.

Danny reached over and squeezed his mother's hand gently. "It looks as if foolishness is bound in the heart of cubs, too, Mother," he laughed.

"'But the rod of correction drives it far from them,' even," she answered, laughing too.

"I think I see more and more why Gad gave us fathers and mothers!" Danny exclaimed, giving his mother a tight little hug, then tumbling back into his bed.

* * * * *

September, 1972

Story 9

WAITER'S WISE DECISION

Waiter's hands and his eyes searched through his desk for the third time for the new ball point pen his Uncle Stanley had given him, but he just couldn't find that pen!

"Hm-m. That's funny," he exclaimed aloud. "I know I put it in my desk last night."

He sat silent and still, wondering what could have happened to the pen. Where could it have gone? It wouldn't sprout wings and fly away of itself, he knew. He felt in his pants pockets, his shirt and his jacket, but the pen was nowhere to be found.

He was so deep in thought over the pen that he failed to hear Miss Brown's voice calling to him. "Where could that pen be?" he wondered, still going through his pockets in a mechanical sort of way.

"Walter. Walter! I said Walter . . ." "O, excuse me, Miss Brown. I was thinking."

Miss Brown's dark eyes snapped and twinkled merrily. "I was one time a child, too," she said, smiling at her class of pupils, "and I know how very, very easy it is to think or day-dream; on a dreamy, sunny bright day especially. Why, my feet just didn't want to be still at all! They longed to be hiking up some mountain pathway or through a meadow all carpeted with beautiful leaves and goldenrod and purple gentian. Yes, I understand. But we're in class now so we must get busy. I asked that you come up to the blackboard, Walter, and work problem number 7 for all of us to see."

Walter slid easily out of his seat and started for the blackboard. On his way past Keith Prentiss's desk something caught his eye. His pen! Keith had his pen! He saw it ... the end with the red dot on it -- held in Keith's hand! So that's where it had disappeared to!

Poor Walter. His mind was in such a state of confusion that he almost forgot how to work problem number 7! He was glad when he had it finished and Miss Brown explained it to the class and told him he could take his seat.

"Whatever should he do about his pen?" he wondered. "Keith must have stolen it. He couldn't just let him keep it without saying something. That would only help him in his stealing."

He bowed his head and prayed silently, asking the Lord Jesus to show him what to do and when he raised his head again he knew what he would do.

He waited until school was dismissed for the day then, when no one else was around, he slipped up beside Keith. "Could you tell me how you got my pen, Keith?" he asked softly and kindly. "I've missed it and saw you had it."

Keith's cheeks suddenly burned red. Anger flashed in his eyes. "I don't have your pen, Walter!" he flared. "It's my pen!"

It's the pen my uncle gave me, Keith. I'd know it anywhere. It has Uncle Stanley's name on it and the name of his lumber company. Up near the top is a bright red dot. I saw it in your hand on my way to the black-board today. Why did you steal it, Keith?"

"I told you, it's my pen!" Keith exploded hotly.

Walter looked at his classmate, pity and compassion written all over his face and in his eyes. "I love you, Keith," he said simply, not wanting to argue. "I... I wish you'd let me be your friend." He began to walk away then turned abruptly "Why not come to church with me?" he asked kindly.

Keith looked full into Walter's face. The hard lines began to melt and fade away as tears filled his eyes. "Why didn't you just do like all the other boys do when they catch me stealing?" he asked suddenly. "They beat me up and tell Miss Brown."

"Because I love you, Keith. Before I came to you, I asked the Lord to show me what to do. The only reason I asked you about it was because stealing is a sin and it wouldn't be right for me to know you took the pen then act as if it were all right. I love you too much to see you hurt any more, Keith. I want to be your friend. A real friend."

Keith's shoulders drooped. He covered his face with his hands. "You... don't know what it means for me to hear you say that, Walter. You see, I don't like to go home at all. My mother hates me and does nothing but yell at me and call me a 'good-for-nothing boy!' Look at my clothes! They're always too big for me and nearly worn out by the time I get them. They're Jerry's hand-me-down clothes. Jerry's her pet. He gets all the new shirts, the new coats and shoes and suits; but me, no, I get cast-offs, the worn out clothes. That's why I took the pen, Walter. That's why I take a lot of things. They're nice. They're new! I never get anything new." By now, Keith was crying hard.

Walter's hand reached out and touched Keith lightly, bright tears blurring his vision. "Keith," he said, crying too, "Keith, listen, I love you; Jesus loves you and He wants to give you something all your own; and it's new!"

"Someone loves me?" Keith asked suddenly, taking a ragged shirt sleeve and wiping his tears. "And He'll give me something? NEW?"

Waiter's eyes were shining bright. "Yes, Keith! Yes! Jesus loves you so much that He died for you! What you did, in stealing my pen, was wrong. Terribly wrong and sinful; but if you'll ask

the dear Lord Jesus to forgive you for all the sins you committed and for everything you stole, and then make those things right and never do it again, you can have a robe of righteousness all your own. Jesus will make your heart all over again and make all things new."

"O Walter, I want what you have. You always seem so happy and joyful. And you could have been like the other boys and reported me but you didn't. You're different. Pray for me. I am sorry for my sins. So sorry for my sins So sorry!"

Mom will be happy to have you and we can pray better in our living room than here on the school grounds."

Sometime later on, Keith emerged from Walter's living room wearing the smile of heaven all over his face. His eyes were shining like Walter's and he was happy. So happy! His sins were all washed away. He was forgiven ... through Jesus' Blood. In his hand was the pen Uncle Stanley had given Walter. It was his very own! When he had made restitution to Walter, Walter thanked him then returned it to him, saying it was his very own. For keeps! Oh how good he felt! He could flash the pen in any direction now. He didn't care who saw him holding it. It was his!

More than that, he had a new heart. God gave it to him. And it was his very own! Looking down at his feet, now shod in new shoes and the new shirt and pair of pants he was wearing, Keith hardly recognized himself. Inside, he was wearing the "robe of righteousness" Walter had told him about, and soon he would put on the garment of sanctification, like Walter. What's more, Walter and Walter's mother had clothed him properly and warmly in some of Walter's new school clothing and, like his new garment of salvation, they fit him perfectly.

For the first time in his entire nine years, he was happy. Honestly and truly happy. He found a wonderful Friend now! And he was loved!

What Keith didn't know (and it was going to make him very, very happy) was that Walter's father and mother would soon be adopting him as their very own son, for Keith's mother was only too happy for him to be gone, while Walter's home, and three pairs of loving and open arms and gentle hearts, awaited his coming, eagerly ... prayerfully.

That night, as he slipped between the clean white sheets, Walter thanked Jesus for helping him to make the right decision. It was a wise decision. Yes, the Lord could even help a little boy to know how to handle a case like a stolen pen!

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By request we are reprinting in this issue and the two following issues the series of articles entitled "In Such An Hour." These first appeared in the January, February and March issues of The Missionary Revivalist in 1963. Not only the children but everyone young and old should read these articles. Surely we are living in the very days of the coming of the Lord. -- The Editor

October, 1972

Story 10-a
IN SUCH AN HOUR

Chapter 1

The last dying rays of the sun filtered warmly through the big French windows and sheer curtains, then lingered caressingly on Margaret Ellen's soft pink cheeks as she carefully placed the last cup in the big china cupboard. Casually she glanced out the window to the fading sunset. A warm flush came into her already rosy cheeks. It was just such a sunset, twenty years ago, when she became Mrs. John Smithfield.

Proudly she glanced at the big Boston rocker where John sat, deep in meditation and Bible reading. His hair was still as black as the day they were married, and he was just as handsome and portly now as then; perhaps even more so: he had added some badly needed pounds to his towering six foot, four inches which enhanced his already striking features.

"You're feeding me too good, Margee," he frequently teased, addressing her by the pet name he had given her.

Quickly she turned away from him to the dying sunset. She knew she loved him -- too much, perhaps. Yet, things had changed recently. Especially since John had gotten sanctified holy and had begun attending the small, but neat, country church in Pleasant Valley. The three smaller children accompanied him also, while Tom, the eldest son, continued going with Margaret Ellen to the fashionable and worldly church on High Ave., in Ritztown.

"John, I do wish you'd not take your pastor's foolish preaching too seriously," and she stood looking down into his kind face; a cloud over her own beautiful features.

"Margee," he said tenderly, touching her hands lightly, "Not again, dear!" And a grieved, pained look came into his tender blue eyes. "He's coming again! I know He is; He said it in this Book, and since I've been wholly sanctified and cleansed from all sin, something within me tells me that His coming is very near m nearer even than most so called Christians believe."

"Oh, John! Don't talk that way. I'm not ready for Him to come. Our home is just now beginning to look like Mrs. Highstreet's and Mrs. Proudheart's."

"My dear, dear Margaret!" John said, rising to his feet and laying his hands gently, but firmly, on his wife's shoulders, "How can you be so unconcerned and so . . . indifferent! Don't you realize that, should Jesus come this instant, you and Thomas would be left behind? Oh, Margee! How can you let material things blind you so!"

"But John, dearest, Rev. Powers said we'd all be sanctified when we died, and that this preaching on Holiness is all fanatical and a lot of nonsense. He said the world is getting better all the time. Look at all the improvements and . . ."

"In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh," John said tearfully, looking into her lovely face. "He also said, 'Behold, I come as a thief in the night; be ye therefore ready! Oh, no! It can't be! My own wife and son not going up in the rapture!'" and his broad frame shook under his heart agony.

"John! John! Do not lose your composure! Our minister said it was all excitement and emotionalism and I believe he spoke the truth."

"If only you had never come into that inheritance, Margaret Ellen! It has changed you until you are trying to be impressionable and fashionable; it is robbing you of something very valuable, which none of your elite class of individuals can give you."

"I'm happy, John; and I think you should be too. After all, it has saved you thousands of dollars."

"How much happier we were when we lived in the little white cottage by the gurgling, laughing stream; where the birds sang us our wake up tunes and trilled us to sleep at night!" John said, looking deep into her hazel eyes.

"Those were good days, John, but so are these," she said brightly. "Now, let's forget all this silly stuff about Holiness and the Lord's return."

"No, Margee," John said, squaring his shoulders. "I'll never forget it! I know I'm sanctified wholly, and I know the Lord is coming back to take His Bride to the marriage supper of the Lamb; and, should it happen tonight I'd be gone, dear; also Mary Ellen, Rose Marie, and Jimmy. You and Tom would be left alone, to face all the dreadful things which will come upon the face of the whole earth after the Rapture."

A look of sadness stole into the young mother's face but she said never a word as she walked silently into the big family room where the children were reading and playing.

The new day dawned bright and cloudless. Lovingly, Margaret Ellen gathered the children into the living room where, since John's recent conversion and sanctification, they had met twice daily for family worship.

"Be a good boy, Tom," father said, ere he departed for work. "And Tom, let the Saviour sanctify your soul. He's coming soon, and I do want our family circle to be complete and share the marriage supper of the Lamb."

"I love you very dearly, father, and esteem you most highly; but Holiness and the career I'm planning just won't mix too well. After I'm established solidly in business I'm going to let the Lord have full and complete control of my life. I believe in everything you've ever told us, and read to us, and some day I'm going to be exactly like you are," and young Tom gave father a warm hug.

"But suppose He'd come today! You'd be left behind. Oh, Tom! Put God first and forget about these trivial worldly ambitions. They're transitory. I'll be praying for you," and he slapped

his son in a warm way on his broadening shoulders then strode into the kitchen where he kissed each of the remaining family good-bye.

The school bus stopped by the big mail box in front of the large brick house and Tom burst into the kitchen, breathless and pale.

"Mother! Mother! Where is Jimmy? and Mary Ellen didn't get on the bus either. Where are they?"

"Tom!" and mother turned ashen white.

Running quickly up the stairway to the nursery she burst into four year old Rose Marie's room where the child was to have been napping. It was empty! A shudder escaped her and she let forth a scream, then a wail.

"Mother! Mother! What has happened?" and Tom was by her side. Glancing into the empty bed he knew. Tenderly he folded his sobbing mother to his manly bosom.

"She's gone too, Tom! Do you suppose . . .? Oh, no!" and she hid her face in her hands.

"We'll call the police and . . . and . . . Dad, too," Tom said, trying to be brave.

The operator at the plant where John Smithfield worked tried vainly to locate him. "I'm sorry, sir," she told Tom. "He was here a moment ago, but he seems to have disappeared. Strange too He was talking to his helper about the Bible and like the twinkling of your eye he disappeared."

Frantically Tom dialed the police station only to get repeated busy signals; but he kept trying. After a long time he got through and explained their predicament. "Funny things are happening here in the last hour." A gruff voice said, "Hundreds of folks have called that some of their relatives have disappeared; maybe right under their nose, too! We can't help you. It's all so mysterious and strange. Never saw nor heard anything like it. Sorry!" and the receiver clicked.

Weakly, Tom ran to the radio and turned it on: "Mystery of mysteries," the announcer boomed, "thousands of people are missing and there is no knowledge of their whereabouts."

Quickly Tom turned the radio off. A moan escaped his young lips as mother let forth a scream. "The Lord has indeed returned and we've missed it, Tom," whereupon she fainted and collapsed in a tiny heap on the hallway floor. (Continued next month)

What will happen to Tom and his mother? Read the next issue!

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November, 1972

Story 10-b
IN SUCH AN HOUR

Chapter 2

Quite sometime after she had collapsed, Tom was able to revive his mother. He led her to the bed and made her lie down. Neither spoke. Words were futile and unnecessary. The Lord had returned and had taken the husband and father, along with the three younger children. Life no longer had meaning.

After her sobbing had subsided to some degree, Margaret Ellen reached for the bedside telephone and dialed her pastor's number as sirens wailed all over the city, and loud screaming and crying was going on in their usually quiet suburban street.

"Hello," a voice said shakily. "Rev. Powers," Margaret Ellen said coldly, "I knew you'd not be gone! You . . . you lied to me. The Lord has come and taken John and all the children but Tom. We alone are left to face the awful things which are about to break. You are a false prophet! I shall never be back to church. John was right! His preacher was right. You have caused me to miss the rapture. Your punishment will be great!" and she clicked the receiver loudly in its cradle, not waiting for an answer.

The days that followed were days of indescribable misery, No longer did Margaret Ellen care for her luxurious furnishings and fine things; but all seemed like a hollow shell -- void and without satisfaction. Tom, too, had changed his attitude and was growing more lean and pale daily. Together they began searching the Scriptures to see where John Smithfield had found all the things he had read to them. The blessed Holy Spirit, too, had taken His departure when the Bride was raptured away, so there was no gentle, tender, pleading dove to woo them. Alone they were left with the agonizing torture of having missed the rapture.

The first few years went along smoothly, business wise. The man who was now reigning over the world was a genius. The whole earth prospered under his early reign and was proclaiming him the greatest of all rulers. His speech was smooth as butter and, by his disguise of true manliness and boundless political wisdom he captured the hearts of nearly all persons. He was admired, respected and worshipped.

Quite abruptly, one day, a drastic and sudden change came over the whole world. For some it was a time of great victory and earthly glory; but to Margaret Ellen and her son, Tom, it brought only a deepening of the already lengthening shadows and dark forebodings.

She had gone to the corner grocery store for a few staples when Mr. Wilson, the ever friendly grocery man, looked sadly at her.

"Where's your number, Mrs. Smithfield? Or the mark?"

"My . . . my . . . mark? My number?" she asked weakly.

"Yes. Your mark," Mr. Wilson said. "There's a new law came into effect this morning. Anyone wanting to buy or sell must have the number; it's six hundred and sixty-six. You may get it in either your right hand or your forehead. See!" and he lifted his hand for the trembling woman to see.

"I . . . don't . . . have it, Mr. Wilson, and I'll not get it," and Margaret Ellen stumbled blindly toward the door.

"Sorry, Mrs. Smithfield, I can't sell to you without it. You can neither buy nor sell unless you take it. That's the law," and he shook his head sadly.

"And be damned forever!" Margaret Ellen said as she departed.

Quickly she hurried home and, taking John's well worn Bible from the bookcase in the dining room she turned to Rev. 13:16-18, and read, as she had been doing daily, and many times a day, since all the family had been raptured away.

"Tom," she said, weeping and wringing her hands, "We must be united. It's here. Exactly what your father said was going to take place: I can't buy food anymore. Mr. Wilson wouldn't sell me so much as a loaf of bread without the mark or the number. If we do receive it we shall be doomed and damned forever. Let us join hands, Tom, and make a vow that we'll be martyrs rather than be damned forever. Will you join me, son?"

Without a moment's hesitation the young lad slipped his brawny hands over his mother's fine, thin, ones and looking her squarely in the face he said:

"We'll die together if necessary, Mother dear. I've been doing a lot of reading in the Bible since father's been taken, and I'd rather die a martyr than take the number of the beast and be lost forever. Rev. 14:9-11 says:

"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

A relieved look came into Margaret Ellen's face, and she patted his shoulders, saying, "you're becoming more and more like your father."

"We'll meet them again someday, Mother; for Revelation speaks of those who have come out of great tribulation:

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints."

For many days Margaret Ellen rationed out what remaining foodstuffs she possessed. She was eating less and less so Tom could have more. Her body was becoming increasingly thinner and her once pink cheeks were pale and sallow looking.

"I'll try again," Tom said one day. "You'd think with all our money they'd be happy to sell to us. I'll offer Mr. Wilson ten times as much as he's asking for the food."

"There's just no need trying, Tom. The law is strictly enforced and must be carried out. Our money means nothing to them. They know that we who have refused the mark and the number will soon be forced to either accept it, due to starvation driving us to it, or be martyred. There's no use to try. We are responsible for missing the rapture and we'll be paying dearly for our neglect and resistance of the truth. The Bible says every sin receives a just recompense of reward, and we are not excluded; even though we had a wonderful home in which we had family devotions and heard the Word read. No, we will not be exempt from what is about to break," and the mother wept bitterly.

Tom, with the hope of youth fresh in his body, vanished through the door saying, "I'll try, Mother. Maybe he'll take pity on us."

After just a few minutes time had elapsed he returned, sad hearted and dejected.

"It's just no need trying, Mother. Looks as though he really means it. Mr. Wilson said he'd be killed if they found out he'd given you those loaves of bread without the number or the mark. He said for us never to come back again unless we took the mark or the number," and Tom's thin body trembled.

What Next? Be sure to read the final chapter, (3), of "In Such An Hour."

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December, 1972

Story 10-c
IN SUCH AN HOUR

Chapter 3

After Tom was denied a loaf of bread because of not having the mark of the beast in his right hand or his forehead, Margaret Ellen became even more conservative. Very sparingly she rationed out what few foodstuffs remained in the house.

Since there was no gas nor electricity the food was eaten right from the cans, cold. Potatoes were eaten raw and there was no bread or fine baked goods. Any, and all, methods of heating had been cut off, and no amount of money could persuade the man at the gas company to turn the Smithfield's gas on.

"Sorry, ma'am. Orders," he had said, then added tartly, "Go get the number. It's not going to hurt you. You afraid of marring that beautiful face of yours; or maybe those lily white hands?" and he laughed a hard, mocking laugh as he wickedly surveyed her beautiful features. Never had she been so humiliated. Timidly, and blushing red under his taunts and gaze, Margaret Ellen left the place of business weeping softly as she walked toward home.

On her way home she passed the big, busy open air market, and smelled the sweet fragrance of hot spicy rolls baking. A nostalgic feeling overwhelmed her and her stomach gnawed and yearned for only one morsel of hot tasty food; but, with head held upright, she walked solemnly home. Everything had changed so rapidly for her and Tom. While the world was functioning much the same as usual, and the same noises and sounds were heard all around her, yet she and Tom had ceased to be a part of it all. They were isolated from even their once cherished friends, and more and more Margaret Ellen's once staunch and reliable friends refused to have anything to do with her: calling her a fanatic for not being willing to receive such an insignificant thing as the mark. Then too, some of the city officials had told her she would be guilty of murder should she allow her son to starve because of her stubborn refusal. Her mind was a turmoil of thought, but her heart was fixed. She would not receive the hated mark -- no matter what the consequences might be.

The nights were becoming increasingly colder and she and Tom were being forced to bed early to keep warm. The supply of candles had long ago been exhausted so there was no light for the house. If only she could find a few pieces of wood the big fireplace would afford cheeriness; but this, too, was impossible as no amount of money could buy any needs. Life was becoming more and more miserable and each night she wept herself to sleep.

"Oh, Tom!" she said next morning, "Why didn't you believe your father and get sanctified? I've caused you to miss the rapture and go through all this torture and misery. Can you ever forgive me?"

"I knew better," the thin lad said weakly. "I always knew father was right; but I wanted a career and a good business. I am to blame. I am no longer a child, but a young man of seventeen. So please don't blame yourself," and his head drooped heavily on his bosom as a sigh escaped his lips.

Margaret Ellen's worries increased as she saw Tom's body growing thinner and leaner. His mental faculties which were normally acute, alive, and alert, were becoming dulled and listless, like his body.

One rainy day as Margaret Ellen sat in John's favorite chair, a light rap sounded on the back door. Rising quickly, she walked to the door and opened it. A tinge of fear swept through her.

"Oh! it's you, Mrs. Newsom. Do come in," and a relieved look came into her eyes.

"Whatever will I do?" Mrs. Newsom asked, sobbing and trembling. "Jane's been out of her medicine for ever so long and she's dying. Dr. Long said she must never be without it, and now since we refused the mark and the number we can't buy anything. Oh, what will we do? Why didn't we listen to our godly pastor and get sanctified? I loved for the children to have worldly fame and popularity and look what it has brought us to! We are responsible for our children," and she wrung her hands in great agony of soul.

"I know! I know! Only too well do I know. I too have learned too late," and Margaret Ellen paced the living room floor.

"Our food supply is now totally spent and exhausted. The girls who remained behind with us are begging for food and threatening to take the mark. Starvation's an awful thing," and Mrs. Newsom dropped her thin face in her hands and wept bitterly.

"Tom and I have barely enough for another week, but you shah have some for the girls," Margaret Ellen said, glancing at Tom. Sensing a spirit of true manliness and courage in his blue eyes, she added, "We , will die together. Never, never take the mark -- you'll be doomed and damned if you do."

"Allan's been thinking seriously of taking it for the girl's sake, and mine, but I have plead with him and begged him not to." The friend said as she continued, "Oh, Mrs. Smithfield, this is far more horrible than I ever dreamed a thing could be! The merchants whom we've known all our life stand and give one a devilish grin when you ask for just one loaf of bread! Why didn't we permit Jane and Becky to get sanctified in our last revival? No, we had such high ambitions for those girls! Jane was such a good cheerleader in school and Becky was leading her class in so many ways, but what has it profited us! Our older girls have missed it! Oh, my two babies! How we do miss their cooing and their prattle!" and a loud, mournful wail escaped her lips.

"It is bad, indeed! Bad enough that we adults should have missed the rapture." Margaret Ellen sobbed, "But to think that I caused Tom to miss it! It drives me nearly mad at times. My influence was great and bad upon my own flesh and blood. I am happy though, to know the smaller children are safe with Jesus and John."

"If I can keep the girls from taking the mark of the beast I shall have accomplished a little good," Mrs. Newsom said. "They're ready to do anything for a morsel of food and some heat and lights. Oh, why? Why didn't I get sanctified?" and she let forth a spine chilling wail.

"So long as Tom and I have a morsel of food you, too, shall have some." With that Margaret Ellen walked resolutely to the pantry shelf which was all but emptied of its once many good things to eat, and divided with her friend. "Raw potatoes are better than starving," she said.

After Mrs. Newsom had departed she sat in the big Boston rocker and wept, wondering what would happen next.

Early the following evening a loud knock sounded on the front door. Tom answered it. A tall, broad shouldered man stepped into the living room, uninvited.

"I hear you're determined that you'll not take the mark of the beast -- our great ruler and genius of the land -- is this so?"

"That is correct," Tom answered unwaveringly.

Margaret Ellen stepped lightly to her son's side.

"A new decree has been issued. You have your choice. A huge image has been made and it is decreed that all must worship this great and mighty image or be killed."

"We cannot worship a dead, bronze image when we are told in God's Word not to bow down to any idol or image," Tom said fearlessly.

"Very well," the intruder spoke, "You decide your own fate. Do you choose to worship the image and bow down to it or will you refuse and be stubborn and be murdered?"

"We choose the latter," Margaret Ellen and Tom said, standing straight and tall.

"But you can't mean this!" the tall man said, looking intently at the pair. "Certainly you don't mean for your fine son to be murdered, and you see it before your eyes!" and his gaze was hard and cruel as he searched the mother's face to see signs of recanting; but she stood as one spellbound, and whose features were now meant for another world as Tom spoke, clearly, strongly, and surely:

"We have already decided. Our decision is final. We cannot worship the image! We will not!" and his young eyes shone with a brilliance and a luster like Margaret Ellen had not seen since John Smithfield was last home, praying around the family altar.

"You choose death to freedom?" the impostor shouted angrily; then, grabbing Margaret Ellen's delicate wrists he shoved her toward the door and, with his other rough hand he took hold on Tom. "You shall have what you are asking for," he shouted.

"You need not force us," Tom said calmly, "We go willingly."

"You have made your own decision. Come with me," he ordered.

Without a moment's hesitation mother and son walked bravely to a martyr's grave.

"Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

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THE END