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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1973

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1-a
THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter I

"This is wonderful, Bob!" Jerry exclaimed, nearly breathless with excitement. "I'm sure glad your grandparents and you invited me to come here. Why Gull Bay's the most beautiful bay I've ever seen!"

"It is pretty," Bob agreed. "Peaceful, too. Especially here where Grandpa and Grandma have their house. We're secluded, the house is back from the woods and this time of year especially we have the beach all to ourselves." He gathered a handful of small stones and sent them flying one by one into the restless water whose proud waves kept coming farther and farther up the sandy beach. "Tide's coming in," he said. "See this wave rolling toward us?"

"It's pretty, but noisy," Jerry said, watching the ever-moving water. Taking his hands out of his pockets, he said, "I'll race you to the point!"

"Let's go!" Bob answered and away they ran.

The 'point' happened to be where the lighthouse stood. An old lighthouse it was, no longer used, except as a roosting place for countless sea gulls and other species of fowl.

The boys reached a place near the abandoned lighthouse in less time than they thought possible even and, nearly breathless from the hard run, they slumped wearily down on tufts of grass and weeds growing near by.

"This is almost like a mattress," Jerry said, laughing and pretending.

"And I'm just tired enough to sleep!" Bob said. Then in the next breath he shouted, "Hey, Jerry, look at those clouds! That one right above us looks just like a giant grizzly bear."

"Say, it does!" Jerry answered. "Only he looks more friendly than any grizzly bear I've seen at the zoo."

"Let's pretend that our cloud grizzly bear is a friendly bear who doesn't mind us following him all the way across the sky," Bob said eagerly.

"This is going to be fun," Jerry laughed. "Let's see what other animals and pictures we can find in the clouds."

For a long time the boys lay quietly on their backs, watching the changing cloud patterns. It was fun. Relaxing, too; and they forgot that they were lying on a tufted grass quilt on the bosom of Mother Earth. They pretended they were lying down on one of the fleecy, downy looking white clouds, sailing, sailing, far, far away across the sky after the now rapidly disappearing grizzly bear.

It was Jerry who broke the stillness and the silence. "Bob, look! Here comes an elephant with only one tusk!" he said laughing and pointing to a cloud appearing out of the south..

"And there's a whole island of the temptingest cotton candy that I ever did see following that elephant!" Bob commented, feeling suddenly very hungry.

"Too bad we can't reach it," Jerry said. "I'd eat till I couldn't hold another bite!" "And be sick, too," Bob laughed. For a long time after, neither boy spoke. Each was busy now watching the moving clouds take on new patterns and shapes of distinct outline. An occasional gull, screeching in a sad melancholy way, sailed gracefully by, then dipped down in a gentle swoop toward the water after some tasty morsel of food for its dinner. Oh, this was fun. Nothing quite like it... just lying on one's back and being lazy.

The soft lap, lap, lapping of the water made both boys sleepy. First Jerry yawned, then Bob.

"Hey, I'm getting sleepy," Jerry called, yawning hard and loudly again.

"Know something? I am, too." And Bob stifled a yawn as he said it.

"And what better place to sleep?" Jerry wanted to know. "This is great. We have the sky for our blanket, these clumps of grass and weeds for our mattress and the soft, cool sea-breeze for our fan!"

"And the waves and water for music," Bob added with a sleepy laugh.

Jerry, watching a frisky little wooly lamb-cloud skip lazily across the heavens, was the first to close his eyes. But no, he must see how far the little lamb traveled! Sleepily, he opened his

eyes and watched again then slowly, slowly and without knowing when they did it, his eyelids closed in sleep.

Bob had been watching a big gull. How lazy he looked circling not too far above his head! In a half-asleep, half-awake kind-of way, he listened to the screeching, calling sound of the gull and before he knew it, he was fast asleep.

The sun had long ago been put to bed when the boys awakened. The moon was coming up in the starry sky. "Say, Jerry," Bob said, sitting up quickly, "we'd better get home. I had no idea we'd sleep this long. It's a blessing that Grandpa and Grandma are gone today and won't be home till later tonight; they'd have been worried sick and would have had the entire police force from Grayport out looking for us."

Jerry stood to his feet and stretched himself. "I sure slept good out here," he said. "Something about the waves and the water makes a fellow feel all relaxed and sleepy."

"It sure does," Bob admitted as they started homeward.

They were passing close to the lighthouse now. An eerie feeling stole over them. The lighthouse looked different in the moonlight than during the day with the sun shining brightly down upon it. Tonight it had an air of suspicion and suspense about it. The boys cast anxious glances toward it.

"Let's hurry," Jerry advised in a low tone of voice, almost as though he felt someone were listening. "Something about the old lighthouse seems spooky and scary tonight."

Bob answered just as quietly, "I know what you mean, Jerry."

The boys feet picked up speed when Bob stopped dead still. "Je. .. Jerry... di... did you see... what I saw?" It was asked in a low whisper.

"Wh . . . what is it?" Jerry stuttered.

"A... a light! In the old lighthouse! Look!"

"It... can't be It can't Bob! You said the lighthouse wasn't used anymore. That it was abandoned."

"It's not. I mean, it is abandoned! I . . . don't understand," Bob stammered, trembling with fear.

"There it is again!" Jerry exclaimed. "Could it be a... signal? Let's get out of here!"

The boys stared in dumbfounded silence. Then in the stillness of the night, they heard a screeching, squeaking sound that paralyzed them with fear. The old lighthouse door was opening! Now what, boys and girls?

See next month's paper, the Lord willing.

* * * * *

February, 1973

Story 1-b

THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHT HOUSE

Chapter 2

The lighthouse door squeaked on its rusty old hinges, then the door opened... slowly, cautiously . . . and the light went out! A man, casting anxious, furtive glances in every direction, stepped silently outside.

Jerry felt as though all the blood from his body were draining out of him. His feet felt cold and icy and he felt faint, weak. "Let's run," he whispered into Bob's ear.

"Don't move!" It was a command from Bob. "Sure as we do, the man will hear and see us and may give chase. Stand still! When the man's gone, we'll take off."

The boys stood still as death. They were afraid to move. To breathe, almost. Bob sent a prayer of thanksgiving up to God that they were in the shadows of some scrub brush. He knew their bodies were blending in perfectly with the dark shadows from the brush.

They watched until the man disappeared from sight. "Now's our chance," Bob whispered, with animation in his voice.

Very cautiously and silently they stole along the edge of the brush until they reached an arm of water where they burst into a run along its edge. Gull Hill was never climbed so fast before and soon they were home.

Not until they were inside the house and had all doors locked, did they speak.

"I'm shaking so bad that I can hardly stand on my feet," Jerry admitted.

"Me, too," Bob echoed, slumping into a chair. "I . . . I can't understand it, Jerry. That old lighthouse has been vacant as long as I can remember and so long as I've lived here. And that's all my life. At least, it's ever since my Mom and Dad died when I was only a few months old. I don't know what to make of it."

"Who would want an old abandoned lighthouse?" Jerry wondered out loud. "And what would they want with it? There's nothing in it, is there, Bob?"

"Nothing. At least there's not supposed to be anything in it."

"It's scary!" Jerry exclaimed, shaking.

"It is spooky, Jerry; but I've got to find out what's going on inside that old lighthouse."
"Bob! You . . . you . . . mean . .

"That you and I are going to find out who's in there and just what he's doing. That's what I mean!" Bob exclaimed.

"But... but how, Bob, how will we find out? What will your grandparents say and think?"

A serious look came into Bob's blue-gray eyes. "I... I hate to do it this way, Jerry, for I've never been sneaky, nor have I concealed or hidden anything from dear Grandpa and Grandma, but . . . well, for now I'm not saying a word about this. Not until you and I find out what's going on around here. Grandfather's not one for adventure anymore. He said he guessed that's a for-sure sign that he's getting older. Oh, he and grandma love adventure for the Lord"

Jerry looked puzzled. "Adventure for the Lord?" he queried "What does that mean?"

"Winning souls to Jesus. That's what it means. Rescuing the lost from sin."

"Oh!" Jerry answered lamely as he choked back a lump that popped up in his throat. It never even asked to come there and pop up like that! Ever since he had come to be with Bob at the Sizemore home he had a funny little feeling inside of him. It was especially acute and real during the daily family altar sessions and when Bob talked to him about the Lord and read scripture passages aloud before leaving his room in the: morning. The Sizemores were different from his family . . . in a wonderful but unexplainable way, Jerry thought. They were different from any family he had ever known. He liked the difference. Even if he did feel funny and heart-hungry-like at times.

Bob was talking to him again. "Grandpa told me about a man he once rescued from drinking himself to death. Poor fellow. He had bad troubles and felt he couldn't live without drink. He must have drunk too much. Grandpa found him along the railroad tracks, lying in a ditch in the dead of winter He thought at first the man was dead; but he picked him up, carried him to his car and hurried him to the hospital, then stayed right by the man's bed until he had passed the crisis, as the nurses called it. Every day after that, Grandpa visited him and prayed with him and talked to him about the love of Jesus and of God. Soon the man got saved. Grandpa said he's a very happy man today, full of the love of God."

Jerry gulped hard now. A wet little tear popped suddenly out on his eyelid and stayed there only one tiny moment before it rolled down his ruddy, fat cheek. "Bob," he said, speaking out suddenly, "I . . . don't want to go with you to the old lighthouse. I . . . I'm not ready to die! I'm not ready to meet God! Suppose that man finds us and..." he shuddered violently as he thought of what might happen. His voice trailed off into silence.

"Would you like to be saved, Jerry?"

"Would I! Why, ever since I came here I've wished that I knew Jesus like you and your grandparents know Him. You talk to Him like He was the best Friend you ever had, and whenever you have a problem you pray about it. Oh, I wish I were saved!"

"We'll tell Jesus about that right now, Jerry."
"Will you, Bob?"

"Indeed I will!" Bob said happily. "We'll make the davenport our altar."

The boys knelt beside the davenport. Bob led in prayer. Jerry, not knowing what to say exactly nor how to say it, cried out loudly, "Jesus, please come into my heart and save my soul. Forgive my sins. I'm so sorry I sinned. Please save my soul!"

It was that simple. But it came from the bottom of Jerry's heart. The dear Lord Jesus saw how truly sorry he was for his sins and He washed each and every sin away through His precious Blood. Jerry was so happy! He laughed and shouted for joy when Jesus came into his heart. He wasn't afraid any more.

"I'm not afraid now, Bob," he said. "Jesus is living in my heart. When do we begin investigating the old lighthouse?"

Bob wiped happy tears of joy from his face as he studied for awhile. "Let's see," he said, scratching his tousled head of hair, "Grandpa calls on and prays with the sick every afternoon from one till five or six. Since there's no one around here for miles, Grandma doesn't mind my exploring the land. Let's go to the point tomorrow, the Lord willing, as soon as Grandpa leaves for his calling."

"Good!" Jerry exclaimed. "I'm right with you, Bob!"

(Don't miss next month's paper, boys and girls. See what happens now!)

* * * * *

March, 1973

Story 1-c
THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter 3

Jerry and Bob could scarcely wait until Grandpa left for his calling the following day.

"There's something evil about this whole business," Bob confided to Jerry as they bid Grandpa good-bye and started through the woods toward the point and the old lighthouse. "I read a Scripture this morning which makes me certain of this. St. John wrote it. It's found in the third

chapter and the twentieth verse and says, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' "

"Well, I'm not afraid any more," Jerry said thankfully. "And I know the Lord is going with us. This encourages me."

The boys walked on in silence, each alone with his thoughts.

"I think we'd better not go right up to the lighthouse, Jerry," Bob said, "Let's hide among the scrub brush, but find a place where we can keep an eye on the door. That way we'll find out if there's only one man or more going in and out of there and we'll see what they look like."

"Good idea, Bob."

They were soon up to the scrub brush that grew in abundance around the old unkempt lighthouse area. "We'll station ourselves right here, Jerry," Bob said, settling himself down among the low growing bushes. "I have a perfect view of the door from here."

Jerry was just easing himself into a comfortable position some short distance away from Bob when he spied something that made him tingle with excitement. "Bob! Bob, come here!" He called in a whisper of great excitement. "A boat! There's a boat here!"

"Sh-h!" Bob cautioned. "Someone just might be close around here. Whoever owns that boat is in the old lighthouse. Quickly he scanned the boat. "This is made for a quick get-away!" he exclaimed in a whisper. Look at that motor, would you! One thing sure, we'll have to move elsewhere. We're too close to the boat for comfort. It's a good thing we're no taller than we are; we wouldn't be able to hide in these bushes if we were."

"But our heads are well beneath the tallest limbs," Jerry exclaimed. "And let's thank God they are. We'd have been discovered a long time ago if they weren't. Say, Jerry, know something?" Bob asked. "I believe there's more than one man in there! It would take at least two men to carry a boat this size back here."

"You're right, Bob. There's more than one man in that lighthouse. Or maybe they're hiding around here somewhere!" Jerry looked anxiously about him.

"We'd better move farther inland," Bob reasoned. "But we'll not move too far away from that door. Whoever's inside must come through that door!"

Silently the boys moved like tigers through the scrub brush. Soon they had settled themselves for the vigil. As time wore on, each became engrossed with the sea, the gulls, and the clouds. They had forgotten about the old lighthouse until a screeching sound stirred them to life. The door was opening!

Chills raced up and down Jerry's and Bob's spines, sending a tingling kind of sensation all through them. Two men, tough and evil-looking, stepped cautiously outside. They looked toward

the beach then cast anxious, wary glances, first in one direction then another. Almost noiselessly they moved forward toward the scrub brush! Bob and Jerry were afraid to breathe lest the sound of natural breathing betray their hiding place. Jerry's heart felt like a giant sledge hammer pounding away inside his-chest. The sound of .the boat scraping its bottom told the boys that the men were dragging it through the marshy land toward the water's edge. Bob strained with all his might to get a good look at the men who by now had raised the boat and were carrying it to the water. Then Bob remembered. That boat! Why, that was old Vic Johnson's boat sure as anything! Old Vic had repainted it only recently and, in a neat hand, he had put Bob's initials on the very front of it. R. S. There it was! R. S., standing for Robert (Bob) Sizemore.

"You've been a heap o' blessing to me, Bob," old Vic had said, "so I thought I'd initial the boat after you."

Bob gasped. These men were thieves! They had stolen old Vic's boat! Anxious thoughts raced through his mind. He wanted to run, to shout to the men to stop and take the boat home to the poor old man. But he remained silent. This would never do, he knew.

It seemed like hours before the boys heard the gentle swish, swash of the oars cutting the water, sending the boat with its two occupants away.

Jerry hurried to Bob. "Whew! They're big men!" he exclaimed in something more than a whisper.

"I'd hate to tangle with One of them," Bob admitted. "Unless the Lord would help us we'd be goners for sure. I wonder where they're going and what they're doing."

Jerry spoke up with, "There's only one way to find out; that's by going to the light-house."

"And we're going," Bob said emphatically, As soon as those two are far enough away. He looked toward the boat that was now cutting swiftly through the water out to sea. "Where were they going," he wondered.

Jerry broke the momentary silence with a startled gasp. "Bob!" he said, "Look! That boat's heading straight for the big ship far out at sea!"

"Why... it is! And that means one thing, Jerry: if something illegal and wicked is going on between those shipmen and the two men in the boat, someone on board that large vessel is watching the point and the light-house with high-powered binoculars or telescopes or something or other like a hawk. We'll have to be careful. Very careful. If we should be discovered it will be too bad for us."

"I hadn't thought of that," Jerry said. "Where'd you learn such things?"

"Grandpa told me many true stories of seamen . . . both good and bad stories they were," Bob said simply. "You see, Jerry, my grandpa was a rugged seaman before he got converted. He can tell you some dreadful things Some good ones, too But say, would you look? A fog's coming in

across the bay This is the hand of the Lord. As soon as it enfolds the ship and the boat we'll make a dash for the lighthouse door."

Jerry was tingling with excitement as the fog completely obliterated the ship and the boat. Together the boys raced for the lighthouse.

"What if there's more than . . ." Jerry began suddenly, as they stood before the door. "You mean more than those two men even, Jerry?" Bob asked. "I ... I hadn't thought of that!"

A muffled moan and groan from within paralyzed the boys with fear. They wanted to run but seemed glued to the spot.

Now what, boys and girls? See Chapter IV for more!

* * * * *

April, 1973

Story 1-d

THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter 4

The groan from within the old light house was louder now and a faint voice was begging for help.

"Maybe . . . we'd better go home!" Jerry said, shuddering with fright.

"We . . . can't, Jerry," Bob said firmly, his teeth chattering. "Someone in there needs us. We'll have to work fast. The Lord seems to have sent the fog to help us, but those wicked men may be back soon."

Bob raised his head upward and asked the Lord to help them. It was risky business, he knew, but he'd have to do something to help whoever it was on the inside.

He grabbed hold of the lock on the door and found that it hadn't been snapped shut at all. The men thought they had snapped the lock but they hadn't! "Praise the Lord!" he exclaimed. "See, Jerry, the Lord is on our side. The Bible says something about the Lord fighting for those that are righteous and about being on the side of the righteous. God kept those wicked men from snapping the lock shut. Now to see what's inside -- and who!" He swung the heavy door wide on its rusty old hinges.

"Over here!" a weak voice cried. "I'm over here. Please help me. They'll kill me if you don't help me."

"We're coming," Jerry and Bob called together. They stumbled their way through the darkness of the inside . . . toward the cry of despair.

"If only we had a flashlight!" Bob lamented. "My hands keep touching all kinds of things and I'd sure like to see what it is!" "Same here," Jerry said. "I... I'm here," the voice called. "And so are we, sir!" Bob's voice said encouragingly as they stood directly over where the sound came from. "Oh, if only we could see so we'd know how to go about helping you!"

"I'm bound," the man explained. "You'll find a pocket knife in my right pant's pocket. Get it and cut the ropes. We must hurry. Those two smugglers will be back within another hour or so."

Bob gasped and Jerry sucked his breath in, quick-like.

"Don't be afraid," the man admonished. "Trust in the Lord. He sent you here in answer to my prayers and He'll deliver all three of us. But hurry!"

Already Bob had his hand in the man's pocket. He found the knife just as the man said he would. With several swift strokes of the knife, the man's feet and hands were loosed and unbound. He made several attempts to stand up but met with failure each time.

"Rub my legs," he said. "I need my circulation restored I haven't used my legs for several days, you know!"

The boys worked industriously over the prostrate form of the man and soon he was able to stand upright. "Let's get out of here and get the police," he urged.

Thankfully, the trio passed through the open light-house door. Bob was careful to fix the lock the way they had found it when he and Jerry entered.

"Which way can we go for help?" The man inquired. "Where's the nearest house?"

"Grandma's house!" Bob exclaimed. "Let's hurry. Those wicked men may be back any minute and with your half-numbed legs we'll not be able to travel rapidly."

"Lead the way!" the man urged, saying few words.

Bob and Jerry, who were used to running the mile-and-a-half to the Sizemore home, thought they'd never get there, so slow and tedious was the journey. Frequently the man cast furtive glances across his shoulder. He was thankful for the fog. His lips moved in silent prayer continually. The incoming fog was getting thicker now. It seemed like a thick cloud was enfolding them inside. He thought of the Children of Israel on their journey to the Canaan land and again his heart rejoiced. The fog would help keep the men from finding him... had they returned from the sea.

Once inside the Sizemore home, he hastened immediately to the phone. "Captain Shannon speaking," he said into the mouth-piece in a low, well-modulated voice.

Jerry and Bob looked at each other in astonishment, The man was a police officer and they had freed him!

"Send five or six squad cars out to Gull Bay immediately! Come only to the top of Marsh Pass. Walk the rest of the way. Yes. To the old abandoned light-house. Surround the old building completely. Stay well hidden. The men are dangerous. Don't do anything until I get there. It must be a surprise attack when they return if they haven't already done so. Got me! Good! I'll see you at the light-house. Soon!" He clicked the receiver in place, then stood up. "Sorry to frighten you, Ma'am," he apologized to Grandma Sizemore, 'and that was quite an unconventional way for a stranger to do... come into your home and use the telephone without asking permission; but you see, this is very important. There's some wicked men in these parts that need to be caught. I knew too much. They knew this; and when a fitting opportunity arose, they abducted me. But God heard my prayers and sent these two fine boys to rescue me. God bless you, boys!" he said, as he laid his hands upon each head. "I must go back now but I shall be around to see you as soon as we clean all the wickedness out of the old lighthouse. That's a smuggler's haven. Quite a racket. But I can't say more. Good-day and thank you?" With that, he walked out the door, down the hill toward the lighthouse.

The following morning the early papers carried the complete story of the arrest of the smugglers and their evil deeds and wicked ways. The top-most line is what thrilled Jerry and Bob. "CHRISTIAN BOYS RESCUE CAPTAIN SHANNON FROM ABANDONED LIGHTHOUSE WHERE HE WAS HELD MORE THAN TWO DAYS. SMUGGLERS ARRESTED..."

"Grandma," Bob exclaimed, when he read a part of the headlines, "did you see this?"

Grandma smiled her sweet smile, then patted Bob and Jerry on the head. "I'm proud of my two boys," she said. "But I hope you don't go playing detective again. Not ever! It's risky business, helping to catch thieves and smugglers."

"Grandma," Bob said, running for the door, "I've got to go and see old Vic Johnson. Those men stole his boat. Jerry and I saw it yesterday. I'll be back soon . . ."

"Hold on!" Grandma laughed. "Not so fast. You didn't read all the article, did you? It tells all about old Vic's boat. He has it . . . safe and sound at his dock again. You must read the article, Bob and Jerry. There's a lot in there you missed. You're to have your pictures taken this morning by one of the 'Herald's' chief photographers. You'll be in the paper! They want the entire story from your lips. And," she added sweetly, "there's a reward for two boys who did so much to help smash a thieving smuggler's ring!"

"Grandma!" was all Bob could say. "It was God!"

THE END

* * * * *

May, 1973

Story 2

HER MOTHER'S DAY GIFT

"O dear, I do wish Mother were going with us to Aunt Matilda's," Beth lamented, stifling a sob as she addressed her older brother Ned. "It won't be fun unless Mother's there."

Ned snapped the latch shut on his suitcase and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "It's time you were growing up, Beth Marie!" he said. "You can't always have Mother tagging along when you go away. Now hurry. Uncle George will soon be here and you're not even packed."

Beth choked back another sob. Tearfully she turned toward the window and looked through the clean, sparkly pane to the garden where Mother was bending over the beans, pulling weeds. "I . . . wish Mother were going," she said again.

"Baby!" Ned taunted. "Don't you think you should cut the strings to Mother's apron, Beth? After all, you aren't exactly an infant anymore. Not at nine years of age!" he mocked, laughing.

Beth made no reply. Turning, she fled down the stairs to the living room, where she gave free vent to her tears.

Ned went over the list of things he planned to take to Aunt Matilda's, making sure everything was ready for Uncle George to put in the trunk when he came. Then, whistling, he carried the luggage downstairs.

Seeing Beth in the living room, he scolded, "We'll never be able to leave early if you don't get your packing done. Go upstairs and pack! Forget your babyishness. Mother'll be here when we get back. We get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend a week-end in our Uncle and Aunt's home by the sea, shore, and what do you do? Stall and cry!"

"I . . . I'm sorry, Ned. I truly am. But I...I can't go..."

"Can't go! Are you kidding? Father and Mother both said we could go . . ."

"I know they did, Ned; but I... I just can't go. Look at dear Mother... out there pulling weeds

"Well, what of it?"

"We should be out there doing that. You and I, Ned; not running away when there's work to be done."

"There's always work to be done on a farm," Ned retorted crossly. "Seems as if we never get done. This week-end is just what we need... and I'm going to take advantage of it."

"Mother and Father don't get a vacation, and they work so very hard."

"Go ahead and stay home, Beth Marie, but I'm not! Here's Uncle George new. You'd better decide one way or the other.., quick!"

"I've decided, Ned. I'm not going," Beth said with sweet finality

"Are you children ready?" Mother asked, coming into the kitchen and washing the dirt from her hands. "Uncle George is here," she announced, with a tired little smile.

"I'm packed and ready," Ned announced proudly, "but Beth isn't."

"I'm not going, Mother," Beth announced grandly, rushing to her mother and throwing her slender arms around her:

"Not going! Why, Bethie dear, whatever has changed your mind?" Mrs. Cranston asked, patting the silken hair of her daughter.

"I couldn't possibly think of leaving you and Father. I can help to weed and clean and . . . and wash dishes and.. and Mother, Sunday is Mother's Day. I want to be with you

"She's a sissy!" Ned said as he helped Uncle George load the, luggage into the trunk of the car.

After they were gone, Beth changed into a cotton work dress and followed Mother to the garden, where she helped pull weeds and pick beans.

"O Mother, I love you so!" she said, working close beside Mrs. Cranston. "I'd rather be home with Father and you than any place I know. And... and, Mother, my very special Mother's Day gift to you shall be me. For three hundred and sixty-five day out of the year, I will be your faithful helper in the house and in the garden, or just anywhere you may need me. I'm just a little girl, I know, but I shall do whatever I can to help you."

"What a wonderful and unselfish daughter I have!" Mrs. Cranston exclaimed through her tears.

"Know what, Mother? Another reason I didn't want to go to Aunt Matilda's was because they're not at all like you and Daddy. Their church is real dead. I didn't want to be anywhere but beside you and Father on Sunday in a church where I can feel God in my soul:"

"The Lord will richly repay you for your decision, Beth. See if He doesn't! The day will come when you shall reap rich benefits from your choice."

"I like doing nice things for Jesus and for you and Father and... and for just everybody, I guess!" Beth exclaimed, laughing softly and flinging her arms out wide as if to encompass the world.

* * * * *

June, 1973

Story 3

JUDGING WRONGLY

Jenny threw her books on the kitchen table, then ran to where Mother was dusting the furniture in the living room.

"Oh, hello, Jenny," Mother said pleasantly. "I didn't hear you come in the door. How was school today?"

"Just awful, Mother. That Harriet Johnson's the most selfish girl I know. I'm never going to talk to her again. Never!"

"Jenny!" Mother exclaimed, straightening up and looking at her seven year old daughter in utter disbelief and astonishment. "Jenny," she said again, "Harriet's your very best friend!"

"She isn't any more, Mother," the little girl said emphatically. "She's the most selfish girl in school. She bought cup-cakes after school and didn't even offer me any, and I always share what I get with her."

"Are you sure she bought them for herself, Jenny? Harriet's a Christian. She's always a sweet and kind girl and is never selfish."

Jenny put her hands on her hips and stomped her foot indignantly. "Well, she bought them! Who else would she have bought them for. She's not my best girl friend any more. She's stingy and selfish and..."

"Stop it, Jenny!" Mother ordered sternly. "I am going to punish you if you say any more about Harriet. We don't carry on like that in this house. The Lord Jesus is looking on and He heard every single word you said. I'm sure, when you learn the truth, you'll find that Harriet had saved her pennies and dimes and nickels and bought the cupcakes as a surprise for someone else. Harriet's like that."

"She could have offered me one!" "Go to your room and pray, Jenny. Ask the dear Saviour to forgive you for pre-judging. It's evil to do this. 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged,' God's Word tells us. If any one dare judge, he is to 'judge righteous judgment,' the Bible says. I think we shall soon find out how wrongly you have judged Harriet."

Jenny's lip hung low and pouty. "Well, it's wrong to be selfish!" she told herself as she went to her room.

Once inside her pretty bedroom, where daisies bloomed a pretty pale-pink in flowers all up and down the wallpaper on the walls, and with dear old Raggedy Ann grinning at her out of the

corner of her briar-stitched mouth, Jenny got serious. Why, there was her very, very favorite doll., dear old beat-up, almost-worn-out Raggedy Ann whom mother had made for her so very long ago, and Raggedy Ann hadn't pre-judged her when she bought that box of candy hearts and failed to offer her so much as one tiny, teeny red heart even! She didn't sulk and pout and get angry with her little mistress and call her selfish and stingy. Indeed not! Raggedy Ann was too faithful for that. She was a true friend. One who kept smiling whether she got candy or not, whether she was played with, talked to or ignored!

Jenny's seven-year-old heart smote her. With dear old Raggedy Ann clutched tight to her bosom and with bright, hot, salty tears wetting the flimsy rag doll's dear head, Jenny knelt beside her bed and prayed. "Forgive me, dear Jesus," she said. "Please forgive me. I've been naughty and so wrong in judging Harriet. I got hateful and nasty with her, Jesus. Please forgive me. I'm sorry . . ."

Jenny sobbed so hard that Raggedy Ann's dear old flimsy neck shook and wobbled fiercely. "I am sorry, Jesus; for I sinned against You. Come into my heart and make me a 'new creature' like Harriet said you made her . . ."

A great and wonderful peace came into Jenny's heart. She knew now that Jesus had made her new within.

Just then Mother called up the stair-way. "Jenny. Oh Jenny, someone wants you on the telephone . . ."

Clutching Raggedy Ann close to her happy heart, Jenny bounded down the stairs. "Oh, Mother," she laughed and cried at the same time, "Jesus just saved me and gave me a new heart!" Just like Harriet's! Won't she be happy to know about it?"

Mother's arms encircled her little girl. "Indeed she will be happy, and you can tell her so right now. She's on the phone."

Jenny's eyes were bright as she said, "Hello, Harriet. I just got saved. I have a new heart just like Jesus gave you. I had a bad feeling in my heart over you, so I asked Jesus to forgive me for it and to come into my heart and He did. Will you forgive me, too, Harriet?"

"Oh, Jenny, I'm so happy! Of course I'll forgive you. But I called to ask you to go with me to old Mrs. Crider's house and help me celebrate her birthday. She's eighty-four years old today and you know how lonely she says she is. She just loves for you and me to stop and talk with her on our way home from school. She told Mother so. Well, Jenny, I saved all my pennies and dimes and nickels for ever so long, and today I bought her a dozen of the fluffiest looking cup-cakes you ever did see. I want you to come over to my house and we'll take her the cup cakes and a little gift."

Harriet giggled softly. Jenny sighed with shame.

"Mother knitted a pair of warm red booties and made an apron for her. She bought the prettiest card, Jenny, and put it on Mrs. Crider's package. It says, 'To Mrs. Crider, with love from your little sweethearts, Jenny and Harriet.' Now isn't that sweet?" Harriet asked as she finished talking.

"Oh, yes, Harriet; but I don't deserve it. I was mean and hateful and spiteful..."

"But you will come, Jenny? I want you and your mother already said you may."

"I'll be over right away, Harriet."

Jenny's eyes were bright as she kissed Mother good-bye Dear, sweet Mother. She was right again ... about Harriet.

"You know something, Raggedy Ann?" Jenny said, looking the doll squarely in her shiny, black button eyes, "I'm never, never going to judge again until I know!" She hugged the doll to her as she skipped along "And I'm going to do like Harriet . . . make people happy!"

Dear old beat-up, nearly-worn-out Raggedy Ann's flimsy head nodded in happy agreement.

* * * * *

July, 1973

Story 4

TAFFY AND THE MOLASSES JAR

Taffy was a fat little playful, roly-poly cocker spaniel puppy. Her fur was all soft and silky and looked almost the color of shiny black coal. She was full of pep and loved nothing better than to romp and roll over and over again on the ground as she played with Jerry and Betsy, her proud little owners.

Every day, at exactly three o'clock, Taffy sat inside the screen door watching the maple lined streets. Her long, curly, shaggy ears would cock this way then that, as she listened intently for two voices.

"Taffy Taffy!" Jerry and Betsy exclaimed in unison as they ran down the garden walk to the door and scooped the eager and excited little puppy up in their arms.

"We're home from school, Taffy!" Jerry exclaimed, hugging the ball of wiggly fur close to his breast. "Now Betsy and I will play with you."

Betsy went all through the house calling and looking for Mother. "That's strange," she said, coming suddenly back to Jerry and Taffy. "Mother's always here when we come in from school I wonder where she could be."

Betsy and Jerry took Taffy outside on the porch-step and sat down to think. Jerry's face wrinkled in thought. Taffy reached up to his nose and tried to lick the wrinkles away. "No. No, Taffy," he said.

"Betsy and I must think. Where is mother?"

Betsy jumped to her feet quickly and ran back into the kitchen. "Here's our answer, Jerry," she called. "Mother left a note on the kitchen table."

"It says that she had to make a rush trip to the doctor with Mrs. Merryman. She'll be home as quickly as she possibly can. We are to be good and to get our homework done."

"I'm going to get something to eat," Jerry announced grandly. "I can't possibly begin to study with my stomach growling and reminding me how empty and hungry it is!" With that, he headed for the pantry and the jar of molasses.

"Jerry, no!" Betsy said sternly, seeing her brother's intentions of 'filling up' on buttered bread spread thick with molasses . . . his very favorite spread. "Mother said to eat only one cookie and a half glass of milk else we'll spoil our supper."

"One teeny little cookie wouldn't so much as fill the tiniest corner of my gnawing stomach!" Jerry chided. "I've got to have at least two pieces of molasses bread or I can't study. So there, Betsy Ann! Mother will never know.., unless you tell her," he added meaningfully.

"But God will know, Jerry and Betsy never finished her sentence. A loud crash and a fierce bang sent her hurrying to the pantry and the disobedient Jerry.

"Oh-h-h, Jerry Look at yourself!" she moaned. "And look at Taffy. Molasses in her eyes, her ears, her nose, and . . . and all through her curly fur. Oh-h-h, Jerry!"

"What will I do, Betsy? What will I do? Mother mustn't know. Not ever!"

"But mother will know, Jerry! Just look at yourself and . . . and look at Taffy Poor dear Taffy! You both look like drippy caramel apples right after mother and I dip them in the hot, sticky caramel. Oh, Jerry, you're one grand mess!"

Jerry stood with his arms akimbo, looking funny and scared and all pasty. Taffy, who had been too busy licking up the sweet tasting stuff to notice either Betsy or Jerry, suddenly got her fill and decided she needed exercise. Barking. gleefully, she raced madly through the kitchen, down the hallway to father's and mother's bedroom.

The big white shag rug at the foot end of the bed was too inviting. Throwing her plump little body down on the rug, she rolled this way then that way.

"Taffy Taffy! No, no, no!" Betsy scolded, trying to scoop the puppy up in her arms. "Catch her, Jerry!" she called. "Here she comes! The house will be a mess."

Just as Taffy started down the hallway for the kitchen, Jerry grabbed her. Molasses dripped from Jerry's hands and his arms and Taffy tried to rub her fur in it.

"Stop it!" Jerry ordered, feeling all stuck up and pasty. "Run water in the tub, Betsy," he said. "Taffy and I'll get a bath." As soon as the water started running in the tub, Jerry dropped Taffy into it. Washing his hands, he quickly untied his shoes then slipped out of them, into the water with Taffy.

"Jerry," Betsy exclaimed, "you didn't even take your socks nor your shirt off!"

"Course not, Betsy. They need a bath too. Look at this molasses. It sticks like glue. Here, you'd better wash Taffy then take her out."

Betsy set about rubbing soap into Taffy's hair. She lifted her ever so gently to wash the gooey molasses from her little pudgy body when, quite suddenly, Taffy gave a quick wiggle of triumph and ran playfully down the hallway to mother's bedroom and the white shag rug. She rolled this way and she rolled that way. Betsy was in tears when she saw the pretty rug all stained and dirty and messy looking.

"Oh, Taffy!" she moaned. "You've ruined mother's pretty white rug. Her beautiful, beautiful rug!"

Taffy, her tongue sticking out in the friendliest kind of dog way, ran gleefully out of the room, thinking it was all a great big wonderful game.

Betsy lifted the pretty rug and dragged it down the hallway to the bathtub. "Move back, Jerry," she said, "we'll have to wash mother's rug."

"But . . . but will it dry before mother comes home, Betsy?"

"I'm afraid it won't," Mother's voice said from the bathroom doorway. "Betsy, whatever are you doing? And you, Jerry? Why are you standing in the tub like that?" Betsy burst into sudden tears. "O Mother, it's awful. Awful! Our house is a mess. It's ruined. Jerry was disobedient again..."

"So I noticed," was Mother's quick reply. "I put Taffy in a box in the basement until we can bathe her properly." Turning to face Jerry she said, "Jerry, since you disobeyed, you will have to clean this mess up. Get out of the tub. Take your clothes off and I'll bring you clean ones. Betsy, you run outside and play while Jerry bathes properly then cleans this messy house."

Jerry blinked the tears back and swallowed hard. "I... I'm sorry, Mother. I really am. I see that it pays to be obedient. Forgive me, Mother. My sins found me out just like the Bible says it would. I want Jesus to forgive me..."

"We'll pray right now, Jerry. Disobedience is a dreadful sin. It will damn your soul in hell. All disobedience is sin! Always remember this."

"I will, Mother," Jerry promised, as he sought and found God's forgiveness and His saving power.

"I'll never forget this!" Jerry exclaimed to Mother when, many hours later, he finished scrubbing the pantry and the kitchen and the hallway floor. "I'm so-o-o tired. I think I'll lie down and rest awhile. And, Mother, I've learned my lesson . . . I'll never disobey again." He sighed wearily.

Mother stroked his hair back from his forehead and kissed the very tip of his nose. "You did a fine job of scrubbing and cleaning, Son," she said. "You deserve a rest. May God bless you. I do believe my boy has finally learned the truth of the Scripture that 'To obey is better than sacrifice.' "

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August, 1973

Story 5

THE WATERMELON PATCH

"Come here, Billy. I've got a splendid idea." Jerry sounded excited. He was busily making a tunnel in the dirt so his truck could pass through, when the idea hit him.

Slowly Billy guided the tractor he was playing with to Jerry's side.

"What's your great idea?" he asked.

"Let's go wading in the creek. I'm hot."

"Say that is a great idea. I'm hot, too. Let's go! I can just about feel the cold water running over my toes," Billy exclaimed, parking the tractor beside Jerry's dump truck.

"I'll race you," Jerry challenged. "Let's go!" Billy shouted. Out of the yard, through the apple orchard across the meadow the boys raced, down to the babbling, laughing stream of cold, cold water.

"Looks like it's a tie!" Jerry exclaimed to his cousin. "We both won."

"That was fun," Billy said, laughing and panting and dropping down onto the cool bank of the gurgling water. "You're quite a runner, Jerry," he commented.

"You're no slow poke yourself," Jerry laughed, as he pulled off his shoes and socks and rolled his pants legs up to the knee. "Um-m, this water sure feels good to hot toes," and he dangled his toes over the bank in the water.

"Like ice . . . almost!" Billy exclaimed, pulling his feet out of the cold water.

"Aw, c'mon, Billy. It's not bad after you get used to it," Jerry coaxed.

"I'll go wading with you," Billy said, "but I've got to get used to that icy feeling first." Again he dipped his feet into the water.

Jerry was suddenly out in the stream. "This is fun!" he asserted, "and so good and cool."

"Here I come!" and Billy was soon wading in the water by his cousin's side. "This is great!" he exclaimed. "Sure cools a fellow off."

Every now and again the boys paused and stuffed their pockets with the clean, smooth, flat stones and pebbles that lay at the bottom of the water's bed.

"Whew! My pockets are getting heavy!" Billy said, shoving another pebble as far down into the pocket as he could get it.

"We'll make roads in the sand out of these flat stones," Jerry said, as they went farther and farther down stream.

"Say, we've walked quite a ways!" Billy said, staring ahead of him. "We're near somebody's farm."

"It's old Mr. Iverson's place," Jerry explained. "And Billy, right down by this bend is his watermelon patch. And what watermelons he does raise! The best to be bought anywhere. See! There it stands!" In a flash Jerry was out of the water in Mr. Iverson's watermelon patch. "Let's get one of the melons and eat it," Jerry proposed. "I'm hungry as an empty bear."

"I should say not!" Billy affirmed stoutly, stepping up on the bank and surveying the patch of beautiful melons that dissolved into acres and acres of corn beyond.

"You scared?" Jerry asked. "What's one melon? Mr. Iverson would never miss it. He'd not know we took it."

"That's stealing, Jerry. And it's a sin to steal. One of the Ten Commandments says, 'Thou shalt not steal.' That means not to take anything that doesn't belong to us . . . no matter how small nor how little it would be missed or wouldn't be missed."

"But Mr. Iverson would never know that one of his melons was taken. Just look at all the many he has! Look at this one. It's a dandy!" And Jerry was tapping on it like he had seen his father do.

"Perhaps Mr. Iverson wouldn't know, but God would. He sees everything you and I do, Jerry. No, I'll not take a melon."

"I'll take it then, and we'll sit here on the bank and eat it together," Jerry said.

"I won't eat a single bite of it, Jerry. It would be just as sinful for me to eat of it as if I took it. Let's go. Don't take it. Mother and Father have taught me to run and flee from temptation. I'm going," and Billy started homeward.

"Would you really like a watermelon, Billy?"

"Not a stolen one," Billy answered.

Mr. Iverson stepped briskly out of the corn field into the clearing where the watermelon patch was. "Would you like a watermelon?" Again the old man asked the question.

"Why, I . . . , I guess every boy likes watermelons, Mr. Iverson," Billy answered. "But I wouldn't take any... never! I'm a Christian. Christians don't steal."

Big tears of joy and pride danced and sparkled in Mr. Iverson's eyes. "God bless you, my lad!" he said brokenly.

Placing an arm around Billy's shoulders, he guided him carefully through the patch. "Now take your pick," he said, smiling, "they're all before you."

Jerry stood speechless. His mouth was open wide in astonishment.

"I... I'm sorry, Mr. Iverson," he said, with bowed head.

"Learn a lesson from your cousin, my boy," the old man said softly "The thief always has his beginning by stealing 'little things' . . . a pencil, a knife, a tablet, a penny, and yes, a watermelon Soon the 'little things' turn into larger things.., tools, toys, clothing and the like. After that, the things get really big . . . cars, radios, money (big money), jewels and furniture of all kinds and soon the thief is caught, sentenced to jail or prison, as the case may be, and is marked for life . . . a professional thief!"

"I . . . I'm truly sorry," Jerry said. "Forgive me, please."

"You are forgiven, Jerry. But always remember that there are two kinds of sorrow . . . the one sorrow is sorry because he was caught in the act of wrong-doing; the other kind is Godly sorrow sorry because he is a sinner and has been doing wrong to God and his fellow man. This

last kind is the kind which leads you to true repentance and restitution and pardon from God . . . a born-again experience."

"I have a mixture of both," Jerry confessed tearfully and truthfully, "but I do want to be a Christian like Billy."

"And you can be," Mr. Iverson said, "right here and now."

In the watermelon patch, a trio knelt and prayed and cried. Jerry prayed until he knew that every one of his sins were forgiven and he was converted.

As the boys hurried homeward with a long, big, ripe watermelon, Mr. Iverson called after them, "If you'll come back on Saturday, there'll be another one for you." Then with a merry twinkle in his wise old eyes, he added, "And who knows how many more! Every boy loves Watermelons. Especially when they're gotten in the right way!"

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September, 1973

Story 6

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME

Miguel burst into the missionary's house. He was weeping uncontrollably. Seeing only Rev. Albright's wife, Mary, and ten-year-old Patty, he pleaded tearfully and pitifully:

"Please, Senora Albright, where is the Reverend? Is serious matter!"

Mrs. Albright motioned to a chair. "Sit down, please, Miguel," she said sweetly. "The missionary is not here. He left for an outstation to the south of us."

"Oh, please, Senora! Is serious matter." The darkly-handsome face of the boy was clouded. Tears streamed unashamed down his cheeks.

"Why do you cry so, Miguel?" Patty asked, standing before her friend and searching his honest face eagerly. For a long time Miguel could do nothing but cry. He hid his face in his dark brown hands as his shoulders convulsed with sobs.

"It may help you if you care to tell Patty and me your troubles," Mrs. Albright consoled softly.

With a rough, work-worn hand, Miguel brushed the stubborn tears away from his eyes and cheeks.

"Thank you, Senora Albright. I will tell you. Always you and Senor Albright help Mother and Father and me." His eyes were raised now to the face of the missionary. "It . . . it... is my sister. She... died.., this morning."

"Your sister! Why, Miguel, I didn't know you had a sister!" Patty gasped. "Until this early morning, I didn't. But God sent Pedro, Arjillo, and me a real, live baby sister. She came to us in the night time; but she . . . she's gone. So soon! Oh, Missionary, where is my little sister's soul? She . . . was not baptized before she ... died. Always, the other church we used to go to, baptized each and every baby that was born. But my sister... Oh-h!" A low moan escaped the boy's lips and his voice shook with emotion.

Gently Mrs. Albright laid her hand upon the shoulder of the little boy.

"Her soul? Why, Miguel, you astonish me. Her soul is now with the blessed Jesus whose blood makes full atonement for all the innocent babies who die before reaching the age of accountability. How very happy your little sister is!"

"But . . . she was not baptized, Senora!"

"Miguel, 'he that is in Christ is a new creature.' You are a new creature, are you not?"

The face of the boy lighted up at the words. "Yes. Yes," he replied instantly. "My heart is washed all clean and pure and white in Jesus' blood; just like Father's and Mother's."

"Good! Since you are 'born-again' or 'converted,' you have nothing more to do with the old life. Right, Miguel?"

"Is so!" the boy affirmed positively.

"That means, then, that you have forsaken all your old habits, customs, beliefs, and ways," the missionary continued.

"Is so! Indeed!"

"Then you must not worry about your little sister not being baptized before she died. This was all a part of your old life. And you were very unhappy and unrestful in your old life."

"Very!" the boy said.

"Remember what Jesus said about the little children, Miguel?"

Miguel studied hard. "I learn so much, Missionary. You mean, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' "

"That is the one I had reference to," Mrs. Albright said, smiling.

Miguel's face suddenly lighted up. He knew Jesus would take very good care of his little sister. "Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Friend of all the little children, takes all those tiny babies home to be with Him when they die. You remember the story we had some time ago about King David. He lost his little baby boy. Just a tiny, tiny baby, too. He said, 'Can I bring him back again? I shall go to Him, but he shall not return to me.' So you see, Miguel, the Christian has a hope of seeing his babies again. The Christian life is the only life that has this hope. When Jesus rose up from the grave, he conquered death; and every one who is a born-again Christian, will some day rise to life everlasting . . . in Christ. The sinner lives, too; only he spends his eternity in hell, with ceaseless pain and torment and woe."

Miguel heaved a sigh of relief. A broad smile illuminated his face.

"I shall know my sister when I get to heaven, Missionary," he said.

"Indeed you will. And you must never again worry over her not being baptized, Miguel. Baptism is meant for the Christian. It is an outward sign of an inward work of grace in the heart. This is why your father and mother wanted to be baptized after they were converted.., to let the entire village know that they were now Christians and had become followers of the meek and lowly Christ."

"Thank you, Senora Albright. You help me much. I learn. I will pray every day for the Almighty God to help me forget all the old teaching and training I had before you and Senor Albright came to my village."

Miguel rose to leave. Turning suddenly, he asked softly, timidly, "Senora, Pedro say he feel all bad and wicked in here," he pounded his heart. "Could a boy of only nine summers be convert, too? Father think Pedro too mall. Could Jesus convert Pedro? He weeps all the time over his sins and his wicked heart."

Party's face was suddenly shining as she answered the questions. "Oh, Miguel," she exclaimed, "Pedro musn't wait another minute. Jesus will save him! Oh, I know He will! I was converted last summer and I was only nine years old, too! Pedro has reached the age of accountability, as Mother and Father put it, and he needs to be saved right new. This very day."

"Will you pray with Pedro?" Miguel's question was simple and to the point.

"Indeed we will," Mrs. Albright and Patty said together.

"I go bring him, then," Miguel stated, with urgency in his voice, "and many of Pedro's friends, too. Jesus Christo said, 'forbid them not to come unto Me.' So I bring them. Lots of them!" And away Miguel ran, to bring the children to the missionary for prayer.

"And a great reward shall be yours," Mrs. Albright said upward, "'For a little child shall lead them.' "

* * * * *

October, 1973

Story 7-a

JOEL AND THE SHEEP DOG

Chapter 1

Joel stretched his long legs far out on the cool grass and yawned softly. Fixing his head in the palms of his hands, he lay watching the bright stars. How beautiful the night was and how peaceful and calm!

"Joel." It was his father's voice.

The boy sprang to his feet. "Yes, father," he said.

The elder man seated himself upon the ground. "Sit down, my son; what I have to say will bring sorrow to your heart. I hate to have to tell you, my boy. O, I wish I didn't need to say it!"

"What is it, father?" Joel asked eagerly, his keen intuition belying his twelve years. "What is it, father?" Again he asked.

The older man stared fixedly at the bright twinkly stars embedded in the deep indigo blue of the sky. "Is... is it... Caline, father?" The old man turned quickly and faced his son. "Why... why yes, it is, my boy. How did you know?"

Ignoring the question, Joel's strong hands fell upon his father's shoulders. "He's a good dog, Father!" he exclaimed emphatically, "And he . . . he doesn't kill sheep! He doesn't! Oh, Father, you must believe me! You must!"

"How did you know about this, Joel? Who told you?"

"Only last week Matthew told me that some of their sheep, the lambs, he said, were missing. He blamed Caline. But, Father, he didn't do it. I know he didn't."

"But Mr. Griershi claims he saw Caline over there early one evening last week," the older man said sadly, "and you know how it is, Joel: once a dog gets the habit it's impossible to break him. There's nothing left to do, son; Caline must die!"

Joel paced back and forth, listening to the soft gentle breathing of the sheep. He gazed quickly into the sky. A shooting star sent a brief shaft of blazing light across the heavens then burned itself out as suddenly as it had begun.

" 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.' " Joel quoted the Scripture aloud.

A gentle nudge on the side of his leg told the boy that the sheep-dog had heard him quoting the beloved Bible passage. In a single swoop of his long arms, Joel enfolded the faithful dog close to him. Great sobs tore his young frame while his tears wet the dense fur of the dog.

"My boy! My boy!" his father soothed. "You must not take it so hard!"

"Father," Joel said, releasing the dog and dropping to the good earth beside his father, "promise you won't do anything with Caline until we have prayed about it. For a week I have been praying. Wait a little longer. Promise me, Father dear! Caline didn't kill the lambs. He really didn't. I know it, but I need more time to prove it. Ever since we got saved and sanctified Mr. Griershi's been trying to make trouble and"

"Hush, my boy! We must pray for the man's salvation."

"That's what I mean, Father. I believe he's under conviction and that is why he acts as he's been acting. But give me time, please. God will solve this. Only don't kill Caline. I love him, Father. He's been our faithful sheep-dog for many years."

"Aye, that he has," the man replied.

The two sat together far into the night, each alone in his thoughts.

The elder man wrapped his cloak more tightly around his body and changed positions.

"You are tired, Father!" Joel exclaimed gently. "Go home to Mother and Judith and John. I can care for the sheep and I am not afraid. The whole earth is full of the glory of the Lord. I can feel His presence, Father. He surrounds me like a wall. O it is wonderful to have Him constantly abiding within you!"

"It is glorious, my boy. And to think that I, an unbeliever, should ever have found the True Light. At times I can scarcely contain myself."

"I know how you feel, Father. Christ has made marvelous changes in our home, too."

A smile turned the corners of the man's mouth. Truer words were never spoken, he soliloquized.

"Go home and rest," Joel pleaded kindly. "The sheep are not restless and I have Caline to help me, should I need help."

Rising to his feet, a shepherd's staff in his hands, the elder man came close to his son. "You are a noble son, Joel," he said hoarsely. "You make the heart of your mother and me proud of you." Placing his strong hands upon the youth's shoulders he asked anxiously, "Are you sure you do not mind caring for the sheep alone?"

"Since the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart I am never alone, Father. No, I do not mind. It... it will give me time to pray."

"May God bless you, Joel, and goodnight."

Joel listened till the last soft footfall of his father faded away into the night then, wrapping his cloak more tightly about his body, he settled down to meditate and pray.

Caline came over and lay down beside his master. Joel's hand went out and stroked the dog's head tenderly.

Caline die! The thought sent a fresh shower of tears down his ruddy cheeks. He would keep believing God! Something wasn't adding up with Matthew and Mr. Griershi's story. Caline had been right beside him every single minute of the day when Mr. Griershi was supposed to have seen him stealing his lambs. Oh, he had to prove it. He must! But how?

Mr. Griershi was a wicked and evil man who had wanted Joel's father to sell Caline to him when he was still just a pup, but Mr. Cohen had refused, stating' he wanted a good sheep dog and Caline would make him one. And he had! In fact, he was the wisest, most obedient and faithful dog his father had ever owned.

A sudden thought tore at Joel's heart. The man was envious! And what was that verse in the Bible about, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave; but envy, who can withstand."

"O God . . . Jehovah God, help us!" he cried out into the night.

(See Chapter 2)

* * * * *

November, 1973

Story 7-b

JOEL AND THE SHEEP DOG

Chapter 2

The night wore away into the early dawn and just as the first faint tinge of pink stole over the horizon Joel and Caline led the sheep toward the watering hole.

He liked the walk down the mountainside to the watering hole and he walked slowly and deliberately as the sheep, every now and again, paused to nibble at the already low-cropped grasses.

Birds, awaking from their night's sleep, were singing lustily and beautifully ere going about their duties for the day. Joel thought they must be praising the Lord.

On their slow descent down the steep mountainside, a formation of tall, jagged, grotesque looking rocks on either side of the trail made a narrow passage-way through which the sheep must pass for quite some distance. Joel led the way with the sheep following him. Caline brought up the rear.

Just as the last sheep emerged through the passage-way with Caline right on their heels, a loud shot rent the stillness of the early morning air. Joel turned quickly about and scanned the trail and its immediate surroundings for sight of a man but he saw no one.

What he did see, made him weak. Caline dropped momentarily to the ground.

Knowing that the sheep could find their way to the water hole which now lay within sight, Joel circled the flock and was soon by Caline, who was limping badly.

A thin line of blood on the trail revealed the bitter truth. Caline was shot!

Dropping to his knees, Joel gently bade Caline to lie down. Instantly the dog obeyed. Such was his nature and disposition ever. Loving fingers and hands felt gently but thoroughly over the body. At last Joel found it, on the right, hind leg. It was a bullet graze merely. "Thank God!" he exclaimed, realizing that with time the wound would heal.

Wrapping his arms about the dog's neck, he wept unashamed into the thick fur, thanking God for having seen to it that the bullet missed the mark. The fatal mark.

"Come, Caline," he said, "we'll go down to the water hole and bathe that wound and see how bad it really is."

But when they reached the water hole and were out in the open where Joel could see the valley for miles around, Caline ignored the water and began his own God-given first aid treatment..., he began licking the leg diligently, thereby cleansing the slight wound as well as doctoring it, for, unknown to Joel, the saliva in Caline's mouth and on his tongue had great medicinal purposes for his healing.

Joel, now sure that Mr. Griershi intended to kill the faithful dog, and afraid to go through the passage way again, took the sheep far out into a wide open space where he could see the land for a great distance. He made sure there were no rocks behind which Mr. Griershi could hide and finish the job he set out to do.

Throughout the day Joel prayed much. He ate but one meal, deciding that, as the missionary had preached, some things could not come to pass except by prayer and fasting. Mr. Griershi's case was one such thing, he felt, and it was up to him, young though he was, to do some fasting along with his praying.

With a few sticks and his outer cloak, he fashioned a tent of sorts under which Caline and he rested and found shelter from the hot sun. The dog seemed grateful that the sheep grazed

contentedly and didn't need driven back in line as on some other days. Joel, too, was thankful mainly for Caline's sake.

Joel knew the leg was bound to be smarting and possibly getting stiff and sore. Repeatedly Caline washed and doctored his wound through the day. When twilight settled in and Joel gave Caline his portion of food, he noted with delight that the dog ate his meal with relish. Happy tears ran down his ruddy sun-tanned cheeks. Caline was feeling some better!

Following the same pattern as that which he had laid out for the day, Joel kept the sheep in the open field, leading them to another watering place and allowing them to graze idly near the water till nightfall enfolded flock, shepherd and dog in its heavy blanket of deep blue and tucked the same securely in place with a myriad of twinkly, glittery stars.

Joel was glad for the nightfall. In spite of the darkness he felt secure and safe. He felt hedged in on every side and knew the Lord was watching Him. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber." He quoted the Scripture aloud. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

"The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." Psalm 122:3-8

"Preserve me from all evil!" Joel exclaimed as the full impact of the Scripture swept over him.

Caline lay his head on the boy's knee as if he were listening.

Sometime during the late night hour Joel was aroused from his dozing and nodding. By what he didn't know. But something had awakened him. Caline, too, sensed it. Possibly smelled it. He was on his feet, his fur bristling and seeming to stand on edge.

Suddenly a scream rent the still night air. It was a man's scream! Now what, boys and girls?

(See Chapter III next month, Lord willing.)

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December, 1973

Story 7-c

JOEL AND THE SHEEP DOG

Chapter 3

Joel sprang to his feet, Caline by his side. The sheep, having been terribly frightened, were on their feet running and bleating wildly. At length Joel's soft voice reached their ears, calming them. Speaking softly and soothingly to them, he and Caline soon had them safely together again and quieted down.

"Now old boy" Joel said to Caline, who kept up a continuous whimper and whose fur bristled, "we need to find out who that was and what happened. But we can't both leave the sheep. It wouldn't be safe. They might panic again. But someone needs help. Oh, God," he prayed, "show me what to do!"

He dropped to his knees and prayed earnestly for guidance. That scream was a scream of distress. It was not a farce. No put on. What's more, it wasn't too far away. Why the bristled fur on Caline if the man was a friend? Joel wondered suddenly. "Please, Lord, help me!" he pleaded.

As if in answer to his prayer, Caline stood by his side whimpering pitifully. Every now and then the dog left him to plunge into the darkness toward the direction from which the scream had been heard . . . then hurry back to Joel.

"All right, old boy, you may go," Joel said, suddenly aware of the dog's pleading and desire. "Go, Caline," he said gently, "and may God guide and protect you.

The minutes dragged by like hours and the hours seemed like days as Joel waited anxiously for Caline to return. He strained his ears, listening for the faintest sound that would tell him the dog was returning., that he was still alive and not murdered by the hand of an envious neighbor, but no sound could he hear save the soft, relaxed breathing of the sheep and an occasional trill from some night bird.

"Caline," he called the dog's name softly so as not to excite the sheep. Sheep were such sensitive animals, and were so easily excited and frightened. The soft, soothing voice of their shepherd kept them calm and relaxed. "Caline." He called a bit more loudly but the call went unanswered. "Please, dear Lord, take care of Caline and bring him back to me."

Toward morning he heard a faint sound. So faint, in fact, that he wondered if he had heard it at all or if he had just imagined it. It sounded like something being dragged across the ground. Joel's body tensed. His ears strained to hear. Was Caline dying perhaps and, in his last final hours, was he dragging his body back to die at the feet of his master and pal? Sudden fear ran through his heart.

Remembering that fear was not trust in God, he quoted one of the verses of a beautiful Psalm aloud: "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee!"

Immediately the boy felt God's sustaining power. Oh, he had found a wonderful Christ when he got converted, "A very present help in time of trouble."

He heard the sound again. It was coming closer and getting louder. What could it be? he wondered, wanting desperately to run towards it but fearful of leaving the flock. There it was again. Now he heard breathing and loud heavy panting.

Unmindful of the flock, he ran toward the sound. Not far away, in the gray darkness of early dawn, he made out the form of Caline pulling, dragging and laboring with something large and bulky and heavy. Going closer, Joel saw it was a man.

"Caline!" he said the name softly, as he was oft accustomed to doing and speaking when he praised the dog. The sheep dog's tail wagged in a pleased kind of way without ever relinquishing hold of the bulky hulk of man until he and Joel had him safe by their camp site for what night remained. Then it was that Joel got his first glimpse of the man. It was Mr. Griershi!

Question after question raced through Joel's young mind, but he thrust them quickly aside. He tossed food to the exhausted, limping Caline and after patting his head and bestowing praise upon him, he made the dog lie down. He then felt for the man's pulse. Was he dead? No, that couldn't be; his body was too limp and warm.

Joel forced his water bottle between the lips of the man and little by little he let some of the water ooze refreshingly on to the hot tongue. Being careful not to waste any, he slowly poured a small amount on the man's neck scarf then laid it across his forehead, praying all the while. If only he had hot broth!

He worked on and on over Mr. Griershi, coaxing and pleading for just one word of recognition by the man. Toward morning, when the first bird song was heard, Mr. Griershi moaned then his eyes fluttered and opened.

"Wh . . . where . . . am I?" he asked weakly and groggily. "Take . . . me home."

"You'll be fine, Mr. Griershi," Joel said softly. "You must rest for awhile. God sent Caline to rescue you"

At sound of the dog's name the man's face went pale.

"That's right, Mr. Griershi," Joel continued. "Caline, the faithful sheep dog whom you tried to kill and destroy only yesterday morning, tonight was your brave rescuer. He dragged you from wherever you were to our camp site. The dog is nothing less than faithful, Mr. Griershi. He wouldn't harm any of the sheep"

"Stop it! Stop it!" Mr. Griershi's voice rose on the still air as he tried vainly to raise his body. "Don't torture me further!" he exclaimed. "Last night I fully intended to do you and the dog harm but a Man met me in the way. He held a flaming sword before me and forbade me to go farther. In spite of his terrifying and bright presence I attempted to go on closer to you. That's

when something happened. It seemed as if I were smitten. It felt like a dagger, Joel. I screamed and dropped to the ground as one dead"

Joel's face was bright with tears. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them," he quoted aloud. " 'Twas God's angel, Mr. Griershi. God is very real and near to His children. You can't run from Him, Mr. Griershi!"

"I know it! I know it! What must I do to be saved, Joel? I can no longer fight against the Almighty and continue on with murder in my heart."

"Confess your sins to God. Repent and forsake them, Mr. Griershi."

"I must confess to you and your father. I lied about Caline! He didn't kill any of my sheep. I haven't missed a head from my flock. I was envious over Caline and his faithfulness. I set out to kill him at any cost, Joel... and you, too, if I had to. But last night the Almighty brought me face to face with His power. I yield, Joel. Right here and now, I yield."

As the sheep began stirring and wandering about after the tender grasses, Mr. Griershi prayed until he found the Bright and Morning Star.

Joel rejoiced. A soul was rescued from hell and the devil and he'd never need to worry over Caline again. Mr. Griershi was so happy that he was hugging the sheep dog for joy.

THE END

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