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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1974

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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SNOWBOUND FOR THANKSGIVING

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Story 1

ALAN'S PRESENT

"Two, three, four, five, six..." "What are you doing, Alan?" Mother asked pleasantly, coming quite unexpectedly into the room where the nine year old was shaking his piggy bank furiously and counting the pennies as they fell through the slender slot onto the floor.

"O, hi, Mom. I'm counting how much money I have in my bank. I'd like to do something nice for Mrs. Thorn. She came from the hospital today."

"Yes, that's what I heard." "Hey! Here's a whole nickel! I'll have to get my pencil and tablet and figure it all out on that. I'm rich. Why I'll be able to do a lot of things for Mrs. Thorn."

Mother smiled to herself, knowing full well that the pennies wouldn't buy much, but she was happy that Alan was an unselfish boy. Quickly she left the room and went downstairs to prepare supper.

Alan followed, jingling the coins together in his pocket. "Be seeing you, Mom," he said, going to the door. "I want to see Mr. Garrett before he closes his store. Bye."

"Good-bye, Alan. Be careful when you cross the street."

In a flurry of excitement, Alan burst into Mr. Garrett's grocery store. "Good afternoon, Mr. Garrett," he said, smiling a big, broad, contagious smile and jingling his money.

"Hello there, Alan lad!" the grocer exclaimed, clapping a friendly hand down upon Alan's slender shoulders. "What can I do for you? A piece of licorice? or a Sugar Daddy, perhaps?" Alan shook his head.

"Some taffy then? Or a stick of cinnamon candy?" Mr. Garrett knew exactly what Alan liked best.

"No, Sir. Not today, Mr. Garrett.

"No candy, Alan? That's strange. Very strange!"

Alan walked past the candy counter as fast as ever he could so he would not be tempted. Mother and father had taught him to "flee temptation" and he meant to do just that. Without waiting for Mr. Garrett to suggest any more flavors, he walked straight to the apples and stopped. "How much would six, shiny red apples cost?" he asked, trying to sound big and grown-up just like his father.

Mr. Garrett scratched his bald head thoughtfully. "Apples, Alan? Well, now let me see..." and the kind store man set about weighing out six of the nicest, biggest, reddest-looking apples in the store. "There!" he exclaimed, wearing a pleased smile on his kind face. "There you have six of the finest and best apples in my store, laddie and that will cost you sixty-eight cents exactly."

Alan blinked his eyes. Sixty-eight cents! Why, that was gobs of money and he didn't have it. He just stood and blinked.

"How about one apple?" Mr. Garrett asked gently, knowing rather well how much the boy had to spend.

"One apple just won't do!" Alan answered, scratching his head thoughtfully. "You see, I want something nice and good and . . . and . . . attractive for old Mrs. Thorn. She came home from the hospital today," he added by way of explanation, "and... and I wanted to take her six big red apples. She likes apples very much and . . . and I wanted to take them to her for... for Christmas and on into the New Year. She's too poor to buy a turkey an' . . . an' I am, too, but I was certain sure I could get her the next best thing . . . apples. She likes them red and hard and juicy. But I guess I'll just have to look for something else."

Mr. Garrett scratched his head now. "Well now, " he said with a twinkle in his gray eyes, "what about a candy bar? Doesn't Mrs. Thorn like candy, Alan?"

"She likes apples far better, Mr. Garrett. I know she does. She told Mother she did. But..." and Alan's eyes wandered to the candy counter.

"This chocolate bar would give her energy,, Alan," Mr. Garrett suggested.

"I... I guess' I'll take it," Alan said, pulling the coins from his pocket and laying them on the counter top.

"That's ten cents, laddie boy. You have four cents over."

Alan put the four pennies in his pants pocket then started home. He took a piece of tablet paper and wrote something on it then folded it ever so neatly and nicely.

Hurrying to Mrs. Thorn's house, he knocked politely on the door.

"O it's you, Alan! How nice to see you again," Mrs. Thorn exclaimed as she stood inside the door and welcomed Alan to enter. "How is my favorite little boy doing since I've been away? How very nice of you to come and see me!"

"I brought you something," Alan said shyly, handing Mrs. Thorn the candy bar and the piece of paper.

Mrs. Thorn opened the paper first. Bright tears filled her eyes as she read, "I couldn't buy you very much; but my gift to you is . . . me! To run your errands,, sweep your porch and shovel the snow."

In one sweep of her arms, Alan was snuggled up close to the aging woman's chest. "O Alan! Alan!" she crooned as happy tears chased each other down her pale cheeks. "You are such a good little example of a true Christian. The Lord will bless you for your kindness to an old woman and He will . . ."

But Mrs. Thorn's words were cut short and interrupted by a loud, insistent knock on the back door.

"I'll answer it, Mrs. Thorn," Alan said, rushing to the door.

"A box for Mrs. Alicia Thorn," a delivery boy said, smiling into Alan's face and stomping his feet to keep them warm.

"There must be a mistake!" Mrs. Thorn insisted. "I didn't order anything. I... I don't have money to... to pay..." Her voice sounded weak and feeble. The boy smiled broadly. "The card reads Mrs. Alicia Thorn. That's you, isn't it? It's yours, Ma'am! And a blessed Christmas to you!" With these words, the delivery boy set the box on the table and hurried away.

With trembling fingers Mrs. Thorn took the card from the box and read: "With loving kindness in Jesus' name; From Alan and Mr. Garrett."

Alan gasped. His big blue eyes got bigger than ever.

Inside the box, with his legs sticking up big and tempting-like, was a turkey, some sweet potatoes, cranberries, bread, butter and jams galore; celery and a great variety of canned fruits and vegetables; some milk and cream and, yes, to top it all off, there was a big box of . . . not six . . . but twenty-six, of the nicest, biggest, reddest, juiciest looking apples Alan ever did see.

"Why, Alan!" Mrs. Thorn said, speechless with emotion.

"Just thank God, Mrs. Thorn. He sent them to you. It's a Christmas present that will get you started off well into the New Year --"

Mrs. Thorn raised her hands heavenward and praised God for His great care over her.

" 'Ye are of much more value than many sparrows,' " Alan said, quoting one of his Scripture verses just then.

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February, 1974

Story 2

LARRY'S GROCERY SHOPPING

The snow piled higher and higher and the wind grew colder and colder. Larry, Tip, Donnie and Brent and David never even noticed.

"Your nose is red like a cherry, Brent," David laughed as his mittened hands patted the snow firmly into place on the new snow fort they were building.

"Sure is nice looking, Larry said as he stood back and viewed the tall snow structure. "Look! Even Tip agrees. See how he wiggles his tail!"

The boys all laughed and stopped long enough to give the excited little dog a gentle pat.

"Let's choose sides," Donnie suggested when the fort was finished. "Larry and I'll take you and Brent David."

"Let's go!" the boys shouted, as each hurried to his post at the fort.

"Larry. O Larry! Hurry down to the grocery store and get me some flour." Mother called from the back porch. "I don't have quite enough to finish setting the bread."

"Aw, Morn! Just after we're all set and ready to have a good snow battle! Can't I wait? Please?"

"Do as you are told, Son, and no more back-talk nor asking why. Come here immediately. Now hurry to the grocery store and don't play along the way. My bread can't wait, dear."

Reluctantly Larry made his way from the kitchen to the grocery store. His feet dragged all the way there and his lower lip drooped and sagged. " 'Tisn't fair!" he exploded aloud to himself and the falling snow. "It isn't fair. Obey, Son! Obey, Son!" he mocked. "That's all I seem to hear anymore."

He was still scowling when he entered Mr. Atherton's store on the corner. Carefully he wiped his feet on the big, chemically treated rug just inside the door then he stepped up to the counter.

Old Mr. Atherton adjusted the glasses on the end of his nose then he said, "Why, Larry my boy, what put that scowl on your face? You don't look at all like the little boy in my Sunday School class every Sunday morning."

"Mother needs ten pounds of flour," Larry said sulkily, ignoring the grocer's question and trying desperately to avoid his face.

Mr. Atherton's chin twitched in a funny kind of way and for one brief moment Larry thought he looked as if he were going to cry. Then very thoughtfully and soberly, the old man started after the flour.

"It pays to be obedient.., happily and joyfully . . . Larry, dear boy," the aged man said kindly as he handed the flour to Larry.

Without saying a word, Larry slid the money across the counter and hurried out of the store.

"Obey! Obey! Obey!" he grumbled and mumbled. "I'm tired of hearing that word. And just for spite, I'm going to make snowballs and hit that old corner post. See if I care how long mother must wait!"

With a determined look in his eyes and his chin fixed and set, Larry tucked the bag of flour beneath his arm. Furiously, he made the snowballs and pelted the splintered corner post.

Without warning, his feet slipped out from beneath him. Down he went. Hard! "Ouch!" he cried aloud. "Oh-h-h. Ouch!"

Suddenly he looked at himself. He was a mess! A while mess. And it wasn't snow! No sir. The flour sack had broken. It spilled all over him. "Oh dear! What ever will I do now?" He was almost breathless with fear. What would he tell mother? What could he tell her?

Picking himself up, he gathered the broken flour sack into his arms, trying to salvage as much of the precious flour as possible. Weakly, he started homeward.

"He . . . here's the flour," he stuttered as he got inside the kitchen door. "I...I fell...and the bag broke."

"What were you doing that made you fall? Did you stop to play, Larry?"

"I... I... yes, Ma'am," Larry confessed, noticing mother's piercing all-knowing eyes (where little boys were concerned).

"Take your hat and coat off, Larry. No playing at the snow fort for you ,today. Go to your room. I'll explain to the boys that you'll not be able to play with them."

"Aw, Mother!"

"Obey me, dear. You were disobedient and you will have to be punished for your disobedience."

As Larry sat in his room thinking, he suddenly realized how very, very wicked it was to be disobedient. Big tears rushed fiercely to his eyes as dear mother, and father's and Mr. Atherton's kind face loomed up before him. He had hurt them all very much by being disobedient. Then another face stood before him. His face looked so sad. With a look of pity, He seemed to hold His hands out before Larry. They had nail prints in them!

Larry dropped to the floor on his knees. He was truly sorry for his sins, and he told Jesus so as he prayed brokenly, asking the dear Lord Jesus to please forgive him and come into his heart and make him a real Christian.

In a little while, he rose to his feet., laughing and crying at the same time. He was forgiven! Washed in Jesus' precious blood! O it was wonderful!

He must hurry down to mother and tell her the good news. She would be so happy. It was wonderful to be forgiven and to know that he belonged to Jesus!

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March, 1974

Story 3

ONE LITTLE CANDLE

The night was cold and blustery and snow was falling like millions of soft white feathers. It came down thick and heavy and fast. Betty Ann, her face cupped between her hands, sat in front of the window and watched as the shiny-bright snow laid a blanket of white over the lawn and the evergreens outside.

The street lamp at the edge of the lawn was barely visible and the screen door at the neighbor's house banged back and forth noisily, making a scary, eerie sound. Suddenly the street lamp went out. The street outside was all dark. Betty Ann quickly hurried to her mother's side.

"Do you think Ben can make it home tonight, Mother?" she asked in a troubled tone of voice.

"He said he was, dear."

"But this blizzard! He . . . he could get lost! The street light's gone out."

"It is bad, Betty Ann, but I believe the Lord will help him to get home all right," Mrs. Anderson answered cheerfully. "It's too bad Daddy had to work tonight. But now you must stop fretting and trust Jesus. Stay here where you are while I light the kerosene lamps. The power lines must be down."

It wasn't long before mother had the room all cheery looking, with the lamps casting a soft, yellowish glow across the room.

Betty Ann sat for a long time listening to the howling blizzard outside, thankful that she was safe within the house.

"Mother," she exclaimed suddenly, "Ben! He'll be lost for sure! There'll be no lights to guide him from the train station here."

"The station's not too far, Honey, and Ben knows his way home."

"Well, I'm going to put a candle in the window to make sure he won't get lost."

Mrs. Anderson smiled at her little girl. "That's a good idea, child," she said. "With Ben's crippled leg and no one to meet him when the train comes in, plus this big blizzard, well, he just may get lost."

Betty Ann stood near the window and watched the candle as it flickered and glowed and cast its small unfailing light through the clean window to the blizzard that raged outside.

"It's time for Ben's train to be in right now," mother said. "I wonder how he will have found Grandfather today."

"And poor dear Grandmother is all alone. I know she misses Grandfather."

"The Lord is with her, Betty Ann."

"Then she's not alone! Oh, Mother, I forgot. If we know Jesus and love Him with all our heart we're never alone, are we?"

"Never, Sweetheart. We have a Constant Companion and Friend."

Just then Betty Ann heard a faint whistle. "The train, Mother! Ben's train! But I can hardly hear it."

"That's because the wind is blowing from the northeast and is carrying the sound away from us. But that's Ben's train all right. A trifle late, but not bad considering the weather. Now we'll both sit right here near the window and watch for Ben."

The two sat inside the window and waited. Ten minutes. Fifteen, then twenty. "Why doesn't Ben come?" Betty Ann asked.

"The blizzard, Honey. Perhaps his leg's giving him trouble again."

"Let's pray, Mother. Jesus will help Ben to get home."

Mother and little daughter knelt side by side in front of the window and prayed. Just as they were finishing, Ben turned the handle of the door knob and stepped inside, a living snow-man.

"Mother! Betty Ann!" he called. "We're right here, Ben. We were praying for you. Jesus did get you home all right!" Betty Ann was so happy.

"I was lost," Ben said, pulling off his coat and gloves and boots. "No lights, you know. Nothing much to guide me in this storm. I was feeling my way, step by slow step. I was going right past the house. Before I knew it, a little glimmer of light shone through the blizzard and directed my feet home. A faint light it was, but..."

"My little candle, Ben!" Betty Ann exclaimed happily and thankfully. "See it shine, Ben!"

"Indeed I do, little sister," the big brother said, gathering Betty Ann in his arms. "Jesus talked about a candle shining, remember? He said it gave light to all who were in the house. Well, your little candle guided my footsteps to my home door just as the Christian's light guides some poor lost sinner to Jesus."

"How is Grandfather?" Mother asked anxiously. "Is he improved?"

"Very much so," Ben said quickly. "The stroke, while paralyzing a part of his body, was not nearly so severe as the doctors first thought. I called Grandmother from the hospital and told her all about it then advised her to get a good night's sleep. The Lord willing, I'll take the train to the city again tomorrow and stay with Grandfather."

"You are a fine son, Ben. Your father and I are proud of you and Betty Ann."

"May I keep my candle in the window for Father?" Betty Ann asked. "He will need a light to guide him, too."

"You certainly may, Betty Ann." "Know what, Mother? I'm going to keep the light inside my heart burning ever so brightly for Jesus, too. I want Jean Marie and Mary Lou to see Jesus living in my heart and come to Him and love Him like I do!"

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April, 1974

Story 4

ROXANN'S EASTER OUTFIT

Roxann skipped gaily down the sidewalk, her long black braids blowing in the early spring breeze. She paused long enough to look at old Mrs. Kettle's bright yellow daffodils that grew all over her front yard. They seemed to be dancing to the wind. Their sunny, golden heads swayed back and forth, back and forth in the breeze. It made Roxann feel good and happy. The Lord had

clothed everything out beautifully. Why, even the tulips wore brand new spring dresses of vivid reds, subdued pinks and gorgeous purples, candy stripes, yellows and oranges.

She stooped down and smelled one of Mrs. Kettle's daffodils. "Oh you beautiful, beautiful flowers!" she exclaimed to them. "How I wish I could afford to buy a big bouquet like you to take to poor old Mr. Jernigan! He's so sour and crabby and I just know you could help cheer him up"

"Did you say something" It was Mrs. Kettle. She came outside without Roxann noticing.

"I was talking to your beautiful flowers," the little girl replied.

"How would you like a bouquet?" Mrs. Kettle asked, smiling at the cheerful child.

"Really! Do . . . you mean it? I... I have no money to pay you for them" Roxann said truthfully, "None at all."

"Who said anything about money, dear! My yard is full of them, as you can see; an I know of nothing finer than sharing them with a small unselfish girl like you," Mrs. Kettle answered.

"Some of the children who pass do more than look and talk to the flowers; they steal them. I don't care to give my flowers to them. But you ..." Mrs. Kettle put an arm about Roxann and led her into the yard. "Pick all you can carry," she told her.

"Oh-h-h!" Roxann gasped. "Ohh! Thank you, Mrs. Kettle. I wanted to give some to old Mr. Jernigan and . . . and perhaps I can take my dear Mother a few also. She loves flowers"

"They're before you, dear child. Pick all you want and all you can carry."

Roxann didn't know what to say to Mrs. Kettle. She was so thankful. "Someday," she said, 'the Lord willing, I shall run all your errands for you. You must let me know, Mrs. Kettle This way I can repay you for your kindness to me

"Hush, child! You are always doing something nice for somebody. This is the least I can do. Enjoy yourself," the woman said, returning to the house.

"Hi, Roxann. See my new dress. It's my Easter dress," a voice said nearby.

Turning, Roxann saw Missy. "Oh, hello, Missy," she said, straightening up and looking at the little girl from down the street. "My, what a pretty dress you have. Does your mother know you have your new Easter dress on? Should you be wearing it . . today? You'll get it soiled and dirty"

Missy tossed her head in disgust. "No," she answered smartly and saucily, "my mother doesn't know I have it on. It's my dress and my business what I have on, Roxann"

"But Jesus is looking on, Missy. He sees you and . . . and He said for us to obey our parents
....."

Again Missy gave her head a saucy little toss and started down the street, muttering, "It's my new Easter dress and you're just jealous 'cause you won't have a new one again! You're jealous! I have a brand new outfit, gloves and all"

A tear slid out of Roxann's eye. She started to tell Missy that she wasn't jealous . . . not one teeny little bit., that Jesus had taken that all out when He sanctified her heart, but she knew Missy wouldn't listen. So, saying a silent prayer, she went back to gathering the daffodils.

She was surprised when she heard Mrs. Kettle's voice behind her again.

"I heard what Missy said about you, Roxann; but never you worry . . . those of us who know you know you're not one bit jealous. Ah no! Sit down a bit, can you? Will your mother worry if you're gone too long?" she asked in a concerned voice.

"I told Mother I was going out to look at the pretty flowers that God has blooming all over. She won't worry, at least not for a little while yet. She knows I'll obey her and be back soon"

"Roxann," Mrs. Kettle began, "never let Missy's words make you feel badly. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't look for our new clothes when we enter His house on Sunday... Easter or any other day. Never! In fact, I'm afraid He's very, very sad when He sees such extravagance and such a great display of the outward . . . the physical. I even wonder if, perhaps, He doesn't feel like weeping, like He wept over Jerusalem when He was here on the earth.

"You see, Roxann, Missy has nothing within to display. Her Easter outfit is all she has
."

"They. . . her folks are., are rich, Mrs. Kettle. She gets lots and lots of pretty clothes"

"But that which you have within is far more beautiful and lovely and pretty than Missy's brand new Easter outfit. You wear your 'inner garment' beautifully, Roxann and you wear it every single moment of the day -- 365 days out of the year."

"Wh . . . what do you mean, Mrs. Kettle?"

"Your garment of Salvation and Sanctification is most becoming on you, Roxann. It would be the same on Missy, too, if she'd ever humble herself like you did and get saved and sanctified. You have the most beautiful Easter outfit of all., you are clothed with Holy garments"

Roxann smiled. She had never heard it like that before. Thanking Mrs. Kettle, she went back to gathering more flowers. She must get to Mr. Jernigan and give him a bouquet. Perhaps he would even allow her to pray with him after he received the bouquet! Mother said there was a key to everyone's heart. Maybe Mrs. Kettle's daffodils would be the key! She would try, and leave the rest to God.

* * * * *

May, 1974

Story 5

MOTHER'S SPECIAL GIFT

There was much whispering and great excitement in the Holton household. Among the children, that is! There was ten year old Bobby . . . the eldest, Sally nine, Marie seven and a half, Trenton five and Jamie four. It was getting near Mother's Day.

"Each of you think of something especially nice to make or do for Mother on her day," Mr. Holton told the children one evening after Mother had gone to do the grocery shopping.

Bobby's face dropped into his cupped hands as he sat on the porch step thinking. "What can we do, Father?" he asked. "Suddenly, I can't even think!" he lamented.

"Be original," Father instructed, "and keep in mind that your mother is ever so pleased with the simple, little things you do."

"Like what?" Marie and Sally asked simultaneously, Then, before Father could answer, Sally arose and rushed into the house. "I forgot," she called over her shoulder. "I have some money in my bank . . . from running errands for Mrs. Burkhart "

"Oh-h goody! So do I!" And Marie soon left the little group on the porch to join her sister in the bedroom they shared to count out the money she had hidden away in an empty baking powder can in her dresser drawer.

"Sh-h! Don't talk!" Sally warned as her sister entered the room. "I'm counting seventy-eight. . eighty-eight (as she picked up a dime), ninety-three, one dollar and five cents. Oh goody! Here's a whole quarter. I remember when Mrs. Burkhart gave it to me. Oh, dear! Now where was I...?"

"One dollar and five cents," Marie said, emptying her can on the floor.

"Thanks, Marie. One dollar and five cents plus a quarter makes a dollar and thirty cents "

"That's a lot of money, Sally!" "Sh-h! I'm not through yet..." and Sally continued her counting. Marie watched as her sister's savings kept adding up.

"Guess how much I have!" Sally exclaimed, bright-eyed, scooping the money up in the palms of her hands.

"I... don't know, Sally. Two dollars and fifteen cents, maybe?"

Sally's eyes were bright with joy. "Four dollars and sixty-five cents, Marie. That is a lot of money!"

"I'll say it is! But let me count mine now. Perhaps we can buy something really nice for Mother . . . by putting our money together."

"Say, that's a great idea, Marie! I like it. What about a dress for Mother?"

Marie shook her head and paused in her counting. "No dress, Sally. We couldn't find one long enough for Mother. Remember when she told Father how that she couldn't find a single solitary dress that was long enough and looked holy and modest?"

"Oh, yes; I do remember. I had forgotten all about it, though, until you mentioned it, Marie," Sally said, a bit crest-fallen. "But we could still buy her a dress . . . in material, I mean! I was with her last week when she looked at some pretty double knit in the SEW AND SAVE FABRIC SHOP. And it was on sale; I heard her tell Father so"

"O do help me count mine, Sally; I'm so excited I can hardly count."

Laughing with pure love and joy in their hearts . . . for each other and for everyone., the two counted Marie's baking powder can savings.

"Is it all tithed?" Sally questioned, when the total figure in the can came to four dollars and thirty cents.

"Every single penny of it! And more!" Marie answered, smiling broadly.

"Oh Marie, we can buy Mother that material. We can! We have eight dollars and ninety-five cents. The material was on sale . . . two yards for four dollars. Why . . . Marie! We can buy mother two dresses and still have a little bit left over. Come, let's ask Father if we may go to the shopping center and buy it . . ." and the girls raced down the stairs.

"How would you girls enjoy a trip to the shopping center?" Father asked as they came out to the porch. "Bobby has enough money for a New Testament for your mother"

"And we have enough money for some pretty material for Mother," the girls chorused.

"Good. Let's go. I told your mother to take her time and for her to get supper up-town, that I'd take care of my dear children. What's more, I know where the very best hamburgers are served."

"Oh-h, Daddy!"

What a grand time of excitement the children had and how utterly delicious and scrumptious the hamburgers and french fries and malts tasted, eaten under big umbrella-covered tables at the Heavenly Hamburger drive-in restaurant!

The gifts were bought and gift-wrapped by loving but clumsy fingers, then hidden away beneath beds until Mother's Day... when they were placed proudly and lovingly before her at the breakfast table.

"What lovely, lovely presents!" Mother exclaimed, leafing through the soft New Testament and handling her beautiful new double knit fabric pieces. "And so thoughtful!" she added, holding a beautiful cut-glass bud vase to her heart ... a gift from Father and Trenton and Jamie.

Next, she opened the Mother's Day cards, each a hand-made original from the members of her little family. Tears . . . happy tears, they were, . . . slid out of the corner of her eyes. "Oh-h! What perfectly beautiful cards!" she exclaimed. "And such lovely poetry...!"

"I believe Mother likes our cards best of all," Sally whispered to Father.

"I think you're right, little lady," Father whispered back. "Didn't I tell you that the little, simple things in life make her very, very happy!"

"Just knowing that we love Jesus and her, and that we're trying always to make her life easy and pleasant and happy, keeps Mother very, very happy!" Sally exclaimed softly into Father's ear.

"Know what, Sally?" Father said. "You're a smart little girl . . . you're right about Mother! May God always keep us this way."

Sally whispered a soft "Amen" as she swooped Jamie up in her arms and put him in the high-chair, ready for breakfast.

* * * * *

June, 1974

Story 6

ROBBIE'S FATHER'S DAY GIFT

"I just must get Daddy something for Father's Day, Brownlegs," Robbie declared aloud to the toad that hopped about lazily in the flower bed along the house. "But what can a little boy get? What would be a right-proper gift for a father as wonderful as Susie's and mine? Everything nice costs so much money!"

Brownlegs gave a quick, indifferent hop and gobbled down another insect, himself entirely too busy to be bothered with a little boy's trivial problem over what to buy for Father's Day.

"Help me to think, Brownlegs," Robbie said, looking intently at the totally disinterested toad.

But Brownlegs did nothing of the kind. He had his own problem to take care of... that of filling his stomach.

Robbie watched the toad until he grew tired of just watching, then he hurried to the front porch and sat down on the top step to think.

"Robbie. Oh-h Rob-bie!" It was Mrs. Akers, the neighbor from next door, and she was calling him. "Rob-bie! Come here. Will you, please?"

"Coming, Mrs. Akers!" the obedient and polite little boy answered, bounding down the steps like Wags, the dog.

"Oh, Robbie, will you go to the grocery store for me, please? You see, I'm having company for supper and I was baking a cake when I discovered that I have no baking powder. None at all! And if you've ever baked a good chocolate cake you know you must have baking powder . . . maybe just a pinch, like my German recipe, but I still must have that pinch; and I don't. How very stupid of me to have forgotten to get it when I went shopping yesterday!"

"Don't worry, Mrs. Akers, I'll be happy to get it for you. Why, it won't take me long at all to run down to Mr. Plumpkin's store for you "

"Oh, thank you, Robbie. You are such a good, trustworthy boy. Here, take this dollar and tell Mr. Plumpkin I need just a small can of double-acting baking powder. Now hurry! Keep the change... a gift of thanks from me."

Robbie crushed the bill in the palm of his hand and hurried down the street. Before he reached the grocery store he unfolded the crisp bill. His eyes bulged big and round. Mrs. Akers had mistakenly given him a ten- dollar bill! Not a one dollar bill at all. No sir! He blinked his eyes several times. What should he do? He wanted a nice present for Father on his day and . . . and Mrs. Akers had told him to keep the change His breathing came out in quick gasps, so excited was he. Why, he'd have lots and lots of money with which to buy father a present!

"Robbie! Robbie!" A voice from inside his heart was calling his name. He gulped several times. "That wouldn't be honest!" the voice said softly. "It would be stealing . . . and no thief will get into Heaven. Mrs. Akers meant to give you only one dollar. You'd be stealing stealing steal...!"

"No! No! Of course I'll not keep it!" Robbie said fiercely to the tempter who was urging him to keep it. "I plead the precious Blood of Jesus!" he said out loud like he had heard Father and Mother tell him to do. Pushing the bill deep into his pocket, he lifted his eyes toward Heaven and began to sing..., not loud, loud, but loud enough so a little bird in the tree heard it and stopped singing long enough to listen to Robbie's song of triumph and victory:

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin:

Each vic'try will help you some other to win.
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.
Ask the Saviour to help you,
Comfort, strengthen and keep you,
He is willing to aid you...
He will carry you through."

"My, you look happy today, Robbie!" Mr. Plumpkin exclaimed as the boy entered the door of the grocery store.

"I am, Mr. Plumpkin. I am! I just gained a great victory . . ."

"Well now, if that isn't nice! And what may I do for you?" the grocer asked.

"One can of double acting baking powder for Mrs. Akers. A small can, she said."

"It's certainly nice to have a trustworthy neighbor-errand boy!" Mr. Plumpkin exclaimed, handing Robbie the baking powder and giving him change for the ten dollar bill.

"Thank you, Mr. Plumpkin. Good-bye. I must hurry. Mrs. Akers needs the baking powder very badly." With that, Robbie hurried home.

"Here's the baking powder, Mrs. Akers and the change. You gave me a ten dollar bill instead of one,,' he told her, placing the money in the woman's hand.

Mrs. Akers stood speechless for a moment. Then her eyes grew moist with tears. "I'm . . . proud of you, Robbie. Very proud of you. You are a real Christian. And say, what church is it you and your folks attend? I should have been going to church a long time ago; but it's never too late to start, is it? So that means that I'll be out to your church on Sunday. Maybe . . . you could sit by me... so I won't feel too strange, Robbie?"

"Oh, I'd be proud to sit by you, Mrs. Akers," Robbie said, thankful that Jesus had given him the victory over the devil and the temptation to do evil. Now maybe Mrs. Akers would get saved! Robbie and his family had been praying for that for a long time!

"Thanks again, Robbie," Mrs. Akers was saying. "Here, take the change out of the dollar and keep it, like I told you to,"

Robbie thanked his neighbor graciously then hurried home.

Father's Day dawned beautiful and clear and sunny. Robbie placed his small gift beside father's plate at breakfast. "It's nothing really great, Dad . . . not near what you deserve nor what I wish I could have gotten you, but it was the very best I could do," Robbie said, hugging his father soundly and saying, "I love you, Father dear!"

"Robbie," Daddy said, "you have given me a far greater Father's Day gift than any money could buy. I heard all about your honesty and the baking powder affair"

"You... you did?" Robbie said in surprise. "I wanted it to be a secret between Jesus and Mrs. Akers and me," he added.

"But those kind of things have a way of getting out on a fellow, Son! And I'm proud of you! Yes, sir! You gave me the greatest Father's Day a dad ever had . . . the priceless gift of an honest and upright Christian boy. Thanks, Robbie! I'm proud to be your father!"

Robbie had to swallow three times before he swallowed the lump down that rose in his throat. "Thanks, Dad," he said in a small voice, "it was Jesus in me."

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July, 1974

Story 7

WHY DONNIE WAS CHOSEN

"Donnie, go look after baby. See that she's all right," Mrs. Coffie called from the front porch swing, where she was mending clothes for the family.

"I will, Mother." And Donnie was in the house like a flash, quietly tip-toeing down the hallway to the baby's crib.

"She's still asleep, Mother," he said, settling down to shelling peas. "She smiled the sweetest smile at me... in her sleep! I love baby Helen and I'm so happy that the Lord sent us a baby girl. I thought a brother would be wonderful, but I know that no baby could ever be sweeter than our little Helen!"

"You have a loving and thankful heart, Donnie, and this makes you feel as you do."

Donnie smiled, ever so faintly. "My heart is different since Jesus saved and sanctified me!" he exclaimed, with reverence. "I feel so sorry for Mrs. Brentley: her Jeff talks back to her and hates his little brother and two sisters. He hits them and makes them cry."

"That's too bad," Mrs. Coffie answered. "I wonder, does Jeff receive any love in his home? Love has a wonderful way of begetting love."

Donnie looked up at his mother's sweet face. He studied and pondered over what she said, trying ever so hard to get the meaning. After awhile his eyes brightened. "I know what you mean, Mother," he said brightly. "You and father love Sandy and Helen and me and we, in turn, love you!"

"It's as simple as that, Donnie. I pray that you and your sisters will always remember this. Love begets love."

Just then the telephone rang noisily. Donnie was on his feet, ready to answer it. "I'll get it, dear," Mrs. Coffie said. "Parents should always answer the phone and see if it's anything important; if it's for one of the children, they can always turn it over to the child."

Very quietly she slipped through the door to the telephone.

"It's for you, Donnie," she announced a short time later. "Mrs. Jenkins wishes to speak to you."

"Me!" Donnie exclaimed, dropping the pea he was shelling. "Me? I can't understand. I wonder why she wants me, Mother. Mrs. Jenkins is... rich." His voice trailed off as he hurried down the hallway to the telephone.

"Hello, Mrs. Jenkins," he spoke into the mouthpiece. "Yes, this is Donnie. You want to see me? This afternoon, you say? Why, yes; that will be fine. Mother and I shall be happy to see you. She's doing some mending and I was shelling peas and minding baby Helen while she sleeps. Yes, yes, this afternoon will be fine. Thank you for calling. Good-bye, Mrs. Jenkins."

Donnie was scratching his head in a puzzled kind of way as he went back to shelling peas. "Whatever do you suppose Mrs. Jenkins wants, Mother? She said she wanted to talk to you and me."

A twinkle brightened mother's eyes. "It's something good, Donnie. Now finish shelling the peas and as soon as I'm finished with this mending I'll prepare the peas for the freezer. They'll taste good this winter, the Lord willing."

Donnie shelled peas, peas, and more peas., with never a murmur nor a complaint. He heard the neighbor boys shout and squeal with delight over a game of ball they were playing in the vacant lot on the corner, but it didn't bother him. He knew that when the garden things were in and all taken care of he could play ball, too. But not before. He loved his father and mother and knew the Lord Jesus was pleased with him doing his share of the work around the place.

It was mid-afternoon when Mrs. Jenkins stopped by.

"I know you are wondering what I want, Donnie, so I shall come straight to the point. I need someone to stay with me for a week or more., and run errands for me . . . while Mr. Jenkins goes away on business. My arthritis is not in the least improved and"

Donnie gasped. Did Mrs. Jenkins mean that . . . that . . . ?

"I would like for you to come and stay with me, dear boy," Mrs. Jenkins was saying, breaking right into Donnie's thoughts. "Do you suppose you could?"

Donnie looked at his mother. "I . . . I don't know," he stammered. "Mother's terribly busy just now. She needs me; and so does father"

"Your mother and I have discussed everything," Mrs. Jenkins said. "She is quite certain she can manage without you for that time."

Again Donnie looked at his mother. She was smiling her approval. "If Mother thinks it's all right I'll come," he answered, "and I will do all I can to help you, Mrs. Jenkins."

"Of that I am sure!" the older woman answered. "I have watched your daily life, Donnie, and it has been a wonderful life, filled with goodness and kindness and love for all. You are so unselfish. This is why I chose you to come and stay with me."

"You . . ." Donnie's mouth opened wide in astonishment and amazement.

"I thought of another boy; but then I remembered how many times I had seen him kick and beat his pet dog and torment his sister until she was in tears. Then, too, he whines something dreadful when his mother or father ask him to run errands for them."

Donnie was absolutely astonished at what Mrs. Jenkins was saying.

"I've been looking up 'back-door' recommendations, Donnie," she went on, "and you meet the test. Whenever you go out into the back yard to help your father or your mother, the cat comes and rubs against your legs and you have always stooped down and stroked her silky fur; the dog jumps all over you and wiggles his tail in the friendliest kind of way.., like he was overly-glad to see you, and you pause long enough to hug his little neck; you help the neighbor's children find a lost ball or marble and I even saw you wipe little Susy Anderson's nose when she was crying, some weeks ago."

"You... you saw all that!" Donnie exclaimed, not knowing anybody was looking on but Jesus. After all, everything that he did, he was doing for Jesus' sake. So long as Jesus was watching that was all that mattered to him.

Mrs. Jenkins was saying something again. He pricked his ears to listen courteously. "O yes, Donnie Coffie, I saw it all! And I could go on and on and on. You have a kind, loving heart, and I like that better than almost anything else. Will you come and stay with me? Mr. Jenkins will feel so safe.., me in your care. And of course, we will pay you . . ."

"But I don't need pay, Mrs. Jenkins. I'll come and help you out of love --"

Patting Donnie on his sandy colored hair, Mrs. Jenkins said softly, "I'll see you soon then, dear boy, and our pay to you will be out of love also."

After she was gone Mrs. Coffie stood smiling down upon her boy. "It pays to live for Jesus, Donnie," she said softly. "It pays... in so many ways."

"I guess I never gave it any thought . . . that anybody ,, would be watching how little boys and girls act and behave, Mother," Donnie admitted. "Nobody but Jesus, I mean, and He sees everything we do! O Mother, I believe I'd better go and pray. I want Jesus to help my light to shine out for Him."

Quietly Donnie hurried down the hallway to his bedroom.

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NO STORY IN THE AUGUST, 1974 ISSUE

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September, 1974

Story 8-a
SNOWBOUND FOR THANKSGIVING

Chapter 1

"Well, wouldn't you just know it!" Connie exclaimed to her younger sister, Natalie. "We come to visit Uncle George and Aunt Barbara expecting a lovely time with our cousins and what happens? A blizzard! A real for-sure blizzard! Look outside, would you!" She placed her hands on her hips and shook her head in utter disgust.

"I like blizzards," Greta Larson the, cousin, admitted, laughing in the good natured way she had.

"So do I!" Greta's brother Chuck acclaimed loudly. "Why, you can do ever so many things when a blizzard's on."

"Like what, for instance?" Connie asked in disgust.

Greta giggled and looked at Chuck. "Well..."

"Well what, Chuck Larson? You can't think of a single solitary thing."

"Constance Johnson! I'm ashamed of you." Natalie said in embarrassment. "And you should be ashamed of yourself!"

"Well, I'm not. And it is the truth. There's nothing to do and you all know it. Here we are, all cooped up in a horrid old house that's big enough to scare you with its funny smelling attic and damp cellar and..."

"Connie! I'm going to tell mother how horrid you've acted. We'll never get to go on another vacation . . . and I don't care if we don't!" Natalie's voice quivered as she spoke. "I... I'm ashamed of you; and father and mother will be ashamed, too, after they hear what nasty things you've said."

"Forget it," Chuck soothed. "Connie could use some church medicine; but until she gets it we'll just have to endure her."

"Just what do you mean by that, Chuck Larson? Church medicine, indeed!" Connie exclaimed indignantly, her face almost as fiery red as her hair.

"What is 'church medicine'" Natalie asked Greta, her heart always open for something good.

"Chuck means salvation," Greta confided. "And it would help Connie's disposition, I must confess."

"Then we shall have to get some," Natalie answered innocently. "Maybe I could use some, too."

"O you could, Natalie. In fact, unless anyone repents of his sins and confesses and forsakes them and gets born again, he'll go to Hell when he dies."

Natalie shivered. She didn't want to go to Hell, that was sure. "Honest, Greta? Tell me more. I don't want to go to Hell."

As Greta unfolded God's wonderful plan of redemption and salvation to her cousin Natalie, Connie, who had been scolding and fussing and murmuring and complaining to Chuck, suddenly became very quiet and listened. "Don't swallow everything they tell you, Nat," she said. "Mother told us they were overly religious. Remember?"

"But I want to know, Connie and I will know! I believe everything Greta has said and I want to be born again and go to Heaven with Jesus and the people who love Him. Greta and Chuck are different from you and me. I like their kind of difference. It gives me a peaceful feeling just to be near them." Turning to Greta, Natalie said, "Show me how to be born again, will you please?"

Greta's face lighted up with joy. "I'd be happy to!" she said. "Let's go up to the bedroom where it's quiet and where we can pray without any hindrances."

"Don't be silly, Natalie! We don't need anything like that!" Connie retorted angrily.

"If Greta says I must be born again to get to Heaven I believe her. I'm going to get it. Come along, Connie. You need it, too."

"Nothing doing! I'm going to sit here by the window and twiddle my thumbs for lack of something better to do, and watch this horrid blizzard while Chuck laughs at me."

But Greta and Natalie didn't hear Connie's statement. They were on their knees praying, in Greta's bedroom where Natalie soon experienced a peace and joy in her heart that she had never before known and experienced. Her sins were all forgiven and Jesus had come into her heart to live and dwell. She was so happy.

It was late afternoon when Connie, who wouldn't do anything the others suggested doing or playing, said quite suddenly, "Let's explore that horrid smelling attic. At least our minds would stay occupied on things other than the blizzard."

Chuck and Greta were against it. "I'm not sure it's the thing to do," Chuck ventured saying, knowing he'd meet with an opposing force in Connie. She was as stubborn almost as the Jensen's mules on the farm that joined theirs. "I wouldn't want to do anything which father and mother Would disapprove."

"You're a pain in the neck, Chuck Larson!" she retorted stormily. "Why would Uncle George and Aunt Barbara care if we explored the attic?"

"Because this house is still very new to us," Chuck answered sweetly and patiently, "and there are some areas in it that even father and mother haven't had time to look through properly. The attic is one of these places. They carted boxes of things up there that we don't need just now, but they haven't really looked all around yet."

"We've only lived here two weeks, Connie," Greta said, "and with grandma getting sick and mother having to go and care for her well, we just haven't had the time to do everything we would have liked to do"

"Then it's time we explored and found out just what's what up there. Uncle George won't be home for a while yet. Your grandmother's home is fifty miles from here"

A shadow crossed Chuck's face. "I'm wondering if father will get home at all in this blizzard!" he said soberly. "I think I'll go and pray for him."

Anger flared in Connie's eyes. "I'm going to the attic!" she exclaimed in no uncertain tones. "The rest of you may do as you please!" With those words, she stomped up the broad, winding stairs.

What will happen to Connie now? See Chapter 2 next month, Lord willing.

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October, 1974

Story 8-b
SNOWBOUND FOR THANKSGIVING

Chapter 2

Chuck hurried to the big pantry off the kitchen and prayed fervently for his father's safe return home. When he came out of the pantry half an hour later with the assurance that all would be well with his father, he sought the girls.

"Where's Connie?" he asked Greta and Natalie who were getting potatoes ready for supper.

"She said she was going to the attic," Greta answered, "but surely she wouldn't do it."

"I'm not too sure about that, Sis. She's a determined one."

"I wish she had let Greta pray with her and gotten saved like I did," Natalie said, heaving a great sigh. Turning quickly and facing Chuck, a potato held in one hand and a paring knife in the other, she said softly, "O Chuck, you and Greta must pray for Connie. She worries me at times. Although ours isn't a Christian home like yours, father and mother do teach us to be good and courteous.

Mother has said she thought your folks were 'overly religious' . . . like Connie told you., but it wasn't said in... in"

"Derision or malice," Chuck said, supplying the word for which Natalie was searching.

"That's it! That's it!" Natalie exclaimed. "At least it sounded like a word with an ugly meaning. I believe father and mother will be happy to know that I got converted and I believe some day they will get saved, too. They worry a lot about Connie and her hateful ways.

"God knows how to deal with her . . . to bring her to Him," Chuck answered his 9 year old cousin. "Sometimes He must use pretty hard measures...."

Natalie's potato dropped from her hand. Turning frightened eyes to Chuck she said, "O Chuck, you don't think anything dreadful will happen to Constance to...to make her want to get saved, do you?"

"Our pastor says God deals differently with different people," Greta said hopefully. "I hope"

"Let's go look for Connie," Natalie proposed eagerly. "I'm scared for her."

"Run along," Chuck told the girls. "I'll stay here and watch for father. He'd be worried if he came home and didn't find any of us around. He may possibly think we were a 11-frozen out in this blizzard."

"Chuck, you're smart," Greta said proudly. "You think of everything." With that, she and Natalie hurried up the stairs.

"Better take a flashlight," Chuck called, taking the steps two at a time and handing a flashlight to Greta. "You know how dark it can be up in the attic. Especially on a bleak day like this."

"Thanks, Chuck," the girls said. "I'm glad you thought about it."

"He's sure some boy!" Natalie exclaimed in wonder. "And he's only twelve, like Connie, isn't he, Greta?"

"Yes, Chuck's twelve years old. He's most trustworthy and dependable and father and mother know that whatever they tell Chuck to do or not to do, that it will be obeyed. We're a very happy family, Natalie."

"I noticed, Greta. And I believe our family will someday be very happy, too. Especially if Connie ever got saved. Honestly, Greta, this would do more to convince father and mother that salvation is real than anything I know of."

"Then we shall have to pray real hard that God will save Connie's soul."

The girls walked in silence down the long wide upstairs hallway to the very far end where they came to a big door. "Well, here we go, Natalie. Up to the attic." Greta led the way up the stairs.

As soon as the door opened, Natalie noticed the strange odor that came from this strange and unfamiliar place called an attic. With every step upward, the odor became more pungent and pronounced.

"Isn't it a big place?" Greta giggled. "I'm so anxious for the day when father and mother and Chuck and I can really explore this place. According to the map...."

"MAP!" Natalie exclaimed, stopping dead in her tracks. "Map, did you say? Whoever heard of a map for a house!" She laughed nervously.

"I know it sounds funny, Natalie; I thought so, too, when we first moved here, but wait till you see the place! You haven't seen anything yet. When Dad fell heir to this place, by a long-removed and gone cousin, and the will read that we had to move here within two months after the reading of the will., which we did., well, I can't begin to tell you how big this place is. We haven't gone through every part of it ourselves yet. Mother says she can hardly wait till spring to see what kinds of flowers will be blooming outside. There's secret passages and...."

"Greta!" Natalie turned suddenly white. "Suppose . . . suppose Connie is lost and . . . and we . . . never find her!"

"She should have obeyed Chuck when he told her his feelings of uncertainty about traipsing up here. Mother said the map showed secret hiding places and passages along the southwest wall."

"But why the secret hiding places and passages, Greta? Our house doesn't have any, I'm sure; and neither did the other big house you lived in."

"That's right, Natalie. But this house is different. It shouldn't even be called a house; it should be called a mansion or an Inn for that's exactly what it once was. A Mansion-Inn-Farm, during the days of slavery."

"Oh, I see! I see!" Natalie answered. "This place was used to help the poor slaves get away to safety then? And freedom?"

"That's it, Natalie. Mother gave Chuck and me several books to read and it really cleared the mysterious passageways of our house up. You must read the books before you go home, Natalie, the Lord willing."

"I . . . I almost feel like I'm living back in history, Greta. This is exciting if . . . if only Connie wouldn't have been so stubborn."

"I know what you mean, Natalie. I feel this same way every day. There are secret hiding places in the floor, too. It is exciting. Father opened one of the secret floor hiding places in his and mother's bedroom and let Chuck and me stick our heads down in it and shine a flashlight into it. The people used to hide their gold and other valuables in those holes then replace the floor square which fit perfectly, and cover the flooring with hand-woven carpet strips the length and width of the room."

"If only we could find Connie! She'd love to hear about this old house. Connie!" Natalie called, going deeper and deeper into the attic.

The girls searched and searched and they looked and looked..., in boxes, behind boxes, between boxes and around boxes but not a sign of the missing girl could be seen.

"What will we do?" Natalie asked anxiously, tears in her eyes and in her voice. "She disappeared! Connie's lost!" She buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Will the girls find Connie? See Chapter 3 next month

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November, 1974

Story 8-c
SNOWBOUND FOR THANKSGIVING

Chapter 3

Greta took Natalie by the shoulders and shook her gently. "Look, Nat, you can't panic now. There's just no need to either panic nor worry..., not when we can pray."

"I'm sorry, Greta. Forgive me. Let's pray."

The girls knelt on the splintery attic floor and talked to God. When they arose, Natalie's fears were gone. "O Greta," she said joyously, "it's wonderful to have Jesus as my Saviour and my Friend. He listens to everything I say! I'm not one bit afraid anymore!"

"I know what you mean. Now, shall we search for Connie again? Mother and I found a secret stairway when we were first up here, but I don't know whether I can find it now."

"Then how would Connie have found it?" Natalie asked.

"I don't know that she has; but then again, she just may have found it. It may be that Constance is just hiding from us."

Natalie made no reply, knowing full well that her sister was certainly not hiding. Not in a strange, dark attic! Greta flashed the light along the southwest wall and ran her hands carefully along the dark wood.

"There isn't anything that even resembles a door!" Natalie said.

"No wonder they called them 'secret passages' and "

"Nat! I . . . I've found it! I found it! The secret something. Feel! Right here!" Greta's voice was full of excitement.

Guiding Natalie's hand carefully along the dark-stained, thick oak panels, both girls' hands came to rest in a slight indentation. "Pull!" Greta ordered.

Ever so stubbornly, the door moved, then stopped.

"Pull again!" Greta urged.

At the girls' insistence, the door was flung suddenly back into a secret place along the wall.

"This is it! This is it!" Natalie laughed joyously, stepping into the musty smelling passageway behind Greta. "It's all so exciting, isn't it, Greta?"

"I'd say yes," Greta replied, "except that the door just now closed behind us."

Natalie's eyes opened wide in alarm. "But... but it didn't make a bit of noise, Greta! Not one single bit! We . . . I never even knew that it was closing behind us. Now, what are we going to do?"

Greta, stunned into silence momentarily, stood motionless for a brief moment. They were trapped and she knew it.

"Whatever will we do, Greta?" Natalie's voice came out thin and small.

"We can always pray, Natalie, and that's what we'll do right now. Mother and Father said one is never alone when Jesus lives in the heart."

If the secret passageway had never heard praying before, it heard it now. And the girls' prayers reached the ear of God. Ten minutes later they arose, confident that their Heavenly Father's watchful eyes were upon them in careful observance and tender love.

"Well, I guess there's nothing more to do than to explore this strange place as we search for Connie," Greta said, leading the way down a long, narrow passageway.

"If I didn't have Jesus in my heart I'd be scared stiff!" Natalie confessed. "But knowing that He's living in my heart and that I'm ready to die makes all the difference in the world, Greta."

"You're a wonderful cousin, Natalie, and I'm glad you came to visit us. Why, you'd make a wonderful missionary! You would!" Greta shined the flashlight into Natalie's face. "I'm going to be a missionary when I'm grown, the Lord willing. Ever since I was six years old I've known that the Lord wanted me to be a missionary for Him. The night I got sanctified... I was seven then... I was more sure of my call than ever."

"Sanctified? What do you mean by that, Greta? And of course, I'll go as a missionary if the Lord needs me and wants me."

Greta studied how to go about explaining sanctification to her cousin. "Natalie, it's like this," she began. "Now that you're saved, you're forgiven of all the sins you ever committed; but in your heart is the something that made you do all those bad and wicked things. You were born with it . . . just like Chuck and I and all of us were. It can't be forgiven; it must be taken out by the Holy Ghost. Our preacher calls it 'eradication.' That's an awful big word for little children, but I know that if you'll ask Him, the blessed Saviour will take that carnal nature out of your heart and will fill you with the Holy Ghost and fire."

"Why, Greta Larson, of course I shall ask the blessed Lord Jesus to fill me with His Holy presence. Can I do it right now? This very instant?"

"In . . . in this dark place?" Greta asked in astonishment.

"Of course, Greta! The Lord's right here with us. We're not alone. You said so yourself. And if I need something more, well, I want it now."

It was a happy and joyful Natalie who arose from her knees a short time later, knowing that her young heart had been wholly sanctified. She reveled in God's Divine love as it overflowed her young heart.

"I feel so clean inside!" she exclaimed. "If only Connie would get saved and find this wonderful peace and joy I have."

"I have a feeling that Constance may be forced into doing some serious thinking," Greta admitted as they walked hand in hand down the secret passageway. "I'd sure hate to be in here without a light!"

"Me, too. But say, Greta, what if Chuck and Uncle George can't find us? These flashlight batteries can't last forever."

"O I believe they'll find us," G r e t a soothed encouragingly. "Daddy has the map, showing where each and every secret hiding place and passageway is located."

"I hope we get out in time for Thanksgiving!" Natalie said. "I'm starved already."

"Say, I forgot all about that! Thanksgiving's day after tomorrow! I sure hope Mothers home by then..., or even before then!"

"And I hope we find Connie!" Natalie said, calling her sister's name loudly.

The only response they received was the hollow echo of the damp, musty-smelling walls.

* * * * *

December, 1974

Story 8-d
SNOWBOUND FOR THANKSGIVING

Chapter 4

"Strange," Greta commented to her cousin, "but it's not too cold in here. It's damp and kind of murky feeling though."

"I wonder if the people who owned this didn't have candles or lights to show the way," Natalie queried. "And I wonder where this will lead us to."

"No telling where, Natalie; and now that I think of it in that way, it may be wise that we go right back the way we came and stay as close to where we got in as possible. Chuck and Father will be looking for us and it will be less time wasted if they can find us without too much searching. We can even call every now and then. It may be they'll hear us. Then too, we won't be making it necessary for them to worry over both you and me and Connie. It may take some time for them to find her."

"Let's go back then," Natalie agreed. "This old passageway may lead us to a river or"

Greta's hand-clasp tightened on her cousin's hand. "Natalie! That's it! That's it! How'd you know? I do remember having read it on one of the maps -- that one of the secret passages leads to the Little River that runs below Father's big grazing field. Oh, you're smart, Nat!"

Natalie laughed out loud. "I didn't know, Greta. I was only remembering something I had read a long time ago and I thought it could just be possible here, too."

"Well, you're right; and we'll go right back to where we startedif there's an end to where we got in."

The girls walked back in silence, their footsteps making soft, padded sounds. Flashing the light ahead of them, Greta suddenly saw a blank wall. "This must be where we got in, Natalie. At least we can't go any farther. How I do wish we could find the secret panel that would slide back and let us back into the attic again!" Greta said, sighing wearily.

"Perhaps we had better just stay right here and wait," Natalie said. Then a new thought struck her. Her eyes brightened. "Why, Greta Larson, I'm ashamed of myself. We can ask our Heavenly Father how to get out. I know He'll show us. He's a great and wonderful God!"

"How right you are, Natalie! I'm ashamed of myself for not asking Him before now. The Bible says, 'All things are possible to him that believeth.' We'll pray and ask the Saviour to help us."

After the girls prayed, they ran their slender fingers along the wall, searching for something to grasp hold of, but they seemed to find nothing.

"This slight crack, Greta, shine the light this way. It may not amount to anything. It's ever so slight a crack, but let's pull together and see if anything happens."

The girls pulled and pulled but nothing happened.

"Let's try one more time," Natalie insisted. "I kind of believe this is it. The door, I mean."

Again they heaved and pulled and strained.

"It moved! I felt it!" Greta shouted. "It's the door! We'll pull harder. Let's try again."

They pulled and heaved and in the next instant the door slid noiselessly and rapidly back on its track into the wall and the girls fell flat on the attic floor..., right at the feet of the astonished Chuck and his father.

"Thank God, we found you!" Uncle George exclaimed, helping Greta and Natalie to their feet and hugging them close to him.

"Where's Connie?" Natalie asked quickly.

"Downstairs, soaking her feet in hot water," Mr. Larson said. "We found her in one of the secret rooms, nearly stiff from fright and from cold. But she'll be all right. She got saved in the little dark room. God saw she needed time to think"

"And time to repent," Chuck added. "But let's eat. I'm about starved. It's way past bed-time and not a single one of us has had so much as one bite of supper even["

Natalie laughed. It was all so exciting and so adventuresome that she had completely forgotten about being hungry any more. "This is the most wonderful Thanksgiving vacation I've ever had!" she exclaimed joyfully, hugging Greta close to her.

Seeing her sister in the kitchen, Natalie rushed up to her and threw her arms about her. "O Connie," she said, weeping and laughing for joy, "aren't you glad we came here! Why, it's wonderful! You and I both got saved and I got sanctified, too, in the secret passage-way. It's wonderful! And now we'll all be together for Thanksgiving, for Uncle George told Greta and Chuck and me that Aunt Barbara will be home tomorrow, Lord willing. O, I love blizzards! Blizzards that make you stay snow-bound! It's fun."

"Know something?" Chuck said. "I can hardly wait till we can really explore this big old mansion Inn. We're living in history . . . almost."

"You are indeed, Chuck Larson, and I only hope Connie and I will be invited to explore it with you and Greta and Uncle George and Aunt Barbara," Natalie said, laughing pleasantly. "I will always call it my 'House of Memories' and the 'House of Answered Prayer.' That's exactly what it is to me and I love it here."

"Even in the dark secret passage?" Greta asked.

"In the dark secret passage, yes, Greta. God was in there with us. It was so wonderful."

Greta rushed over to her cousin and hugged her soundly. "You'll make a wonderful missionary, Natalie," she said. "Missionaries are brave people." Chuck looked at the girls for a long time, then he suddenly spoke. "Missionaries are brave people; but missionaries have to eat like regular people. When do we eat?"

All three girls took the hint and began getting supper, laughing gleefully as they did so.

(The End)

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