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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1977

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1-a
HIDDEN TREASURE

Chapter 1

Shawnda and Scott climbed the bluff at the end of the mission compound and stood on the large sandstone rock that jutted out over the hill in a great circle of enormity and immensity, its very center rising toward the heavens in the form of a towering pyramid.

In a way, their strange new life and its way of living was lonely, but for the most part it was wonderful and extremely exciting. There were times when they grew terribly homesick to see Grandfather and Grandmother Kinsey and their many friends they left behind in Sunrise Bay, but they never complained nor murmured: God had called their father and mother to minister to the Indians and that made them missionaries too.

"Look yonder," Scott said to his sister, shielding his eyes from the glaring hot sun and with his other hand pointing toward a grove of cottonwood trees whose leaves danced and rustled fiercely in the early morning breeze.

Shawnda stood on tip-toe, allowing her gaze to follow in the direction Scott was pointing, then she let out a great whoop of delight. "It's Little Star, Scott! It is! She's coming back!" she exclaimed excitedly, turning from the mammoth rock and starting down the bluff. Then just as quickly, she stopped dead still in her tracks. "It's quite early for her to come and play," she said thoughtfully. "I... I wonder if something's... wrong.

Fear clutched at Shawnda's heart and she turned to her brother, three years older than her eight summers. "I hope there's no... trouble . . . again," she said, holding her throat with her hand. "You mean... her big brother?" "Ye... yes." Shawnda's reply came out little and small sounding to even her own ears.

Scott looked into her frightened eyes. "Don't think about it, Shawnda," he advised. "After all, the Bible tells us that we are to think only upon those things that are pure and lovely and honest and beautiful..."

"I know; but how can I help not to remember how Big Horn beat Little Star and her mother? Oh, Scott, I . . . I'm scared!"

"The eleven year old looked aghast. "Shawnda!" he exclaimed suddenly, "Where's your faith in God? 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,' " Scott quoted from the 91st Psalm.

The tears fell fast down Shawnda's face. "I'm sorry, Scott. I really am. I want to be brave like Mother and Father and you, but . . ."

"Forget the 'buts', little sister, and just trust God. After all, if this tribe is going to be won for Jesus we're going to have to be brave and full of courage and Christian love ourselves. It means that you and I must do everything we can to help the boys and girls. They're watching our lives closely to see if we really do believe in and trust our God. We dare not be cowardly!" Scott asserted stoutly, sounding old beyond his years.

Shawnda let out a great, long sigh. "If only we had Bibles from which they could read," she lamented. "It would help so very much. I'm sure more of them would get saved and sanctified if they could read for themselves and see that everything Daddy tells them is in the Bible. A wistful, far-away look came into her blue eyes. "I know one thing, Scott, Big Horn would never, never beat his mother and Little Star again. Not if he got converted."

Scott looked across the mesa to the distant hills and far-flung mountains and when he spoke his voice was full of pity and sadness. "It is drink -- strong drink -- which makes Big Horn like he is," he said. "And someday ... yes, someday ... these Indians will have their very own Bible -- printed in their language! Daddy's working hard on the translation, but it takes much time."

"That's true," Shawnda replied, "And it makes me wish that I could help Father with these strange letters and... and markings." A giggle escaped the naturally red lips of the girl as she said softly, "It looks like chickens scratching on paper, Scott. It does. Why their letters are completely different from ours. I wonder that they can understand anything. It's such funny looking . . . markings." Again she giggled.

"And they feel the very same way about our alphabet, Shawnda -- our letters. "

"But ours is easy," Shawnda demurred.

"That's because we know it and understand it. Anything's easy if you know it and understand it."

Shawnda just stood there, rooted to the solidarity of the great rock. No matter what Scott said about why the English alphabet was easy for her, she still couldn't see why it should not be equally easy and simple to grasp and understand for their many new Indian friends.

Shaking her head, she finally said, "Let's go down and see why Little Star is here so early. It must be important: see how she runs!"

"I'll race you," Scott said quickly. Shawnda, always ready for a challenge, smiled broadly and answered, "OK: Let's go! One, two, three, and we're off!"

Shawnda was in the lead. Scott allowed her to get a good start on him; after all, he was bigger and taller and his legs were far longer than those of his sister: it was only fair that the little blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl should make some progress before he started.

When Shawnda was halfway down the hill, Scott took off after her and in a short time he passed her and reached the mission station where he fell to the ground on his stomach beneath a rustly sounding cottonwood tree and awaited his sister's arrival.

Shawnda's mind, however, wasn't on racing at all any longer; it was on Little Star. She was sure that her beloved new friend with the long, shiny, jet-black hair and equally dark eyes had a bit of important news to tell her. She felt it all through her bones. Oh, it was exciting. Very exciting, this feeling that she had. (See Chapter 2)

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February, 1977

Story 1-b
HIDDEN TREASURE

Chapter 2

Shawnda ran down the hill as fast as her short, eight year old legs would carry her, her silken, wheat-colored hair flying out behind her shoulders and the gentle breeze fanning her face.

Since moving to the mission station and living among the friendly Indians she had learned that everything had a name, even the wind. Shawnda liked the name of the warm, gentle breezes and she herself looked heavenward on more than one occasion and said, "Thank you, dear Jesus, for Mr. South Wind. You made him so he could fan my face and rustle the cottonwoods and play hide-and-go-seek with them. Thank you, God."

Even Little Star had begun to thank God for Mr. South Wind.

Seeing her friend was almost at the mission house, Shawnda ran faster now. "Little Star! Little Star!" she called happily, reaching the bottom of the bluff and running forward to meet the

little Indian girl. "Tin so very glad to see you!" she said, laughing. "Is all well? Your mother . . . she . . . she's all right?"

"Ali's well, my little paleface friend!" Little Star exclaimed happily, smiling broadly into Shawnda's anxious face. "Big Horn isn't always fighting and bad."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear that! But why would he fight at all and.., and beat you and.., and your mother? Doesn't he know that Jesus hates fighting? And ... and the Bible says children are to obey their parents and to honor them. You know what honor means; or don't you?"

Little Star shook her head, not at all sure of the meaning of this new English word.

Shawnda, trying desperately to relate the meaning of the word to her friend in a way she could understand, 'said with eyes aglow, "You know great lion?"

The dark head nodded assent and the equally dark eyes shone with recognition and understanding.

"You don't ever, ever beat great lion, do you?"

A ripple of laughter gurgled from Little Star's lips. "No. No! Indeed not/ Great lion . . . Oh-h-h!" the girl exclaimed, trying to relate to her friend just why no one ever even thought of trying to beat great lion. He was too fierce. It took Strong bows and arrows to conquer him; or the white man's noise gun.

"Well, you respect great lion, you honor him, Shawnda explained. Then, realizing that something wasn't quite right, she added, "you respect great lion because of fear; but with parents it's different, Little Star: you honor and respect your parents because you love them very, very much."

Little Star's eyes brightened. "Like we love and respect Great Spirit!" she said brightly.

"Kind of; only you worship the Great Spirit and a real Christian never worships his mother or father. The Bible says, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' You see, Little Star, there is only one true, living God. He's the Heavenly Father. He loved us so much that He sent His only Son to come into the world and die on a cruel cross for our sins -yours and mine -- and we must worship no one but this true God. The God of all gods.

"All gods, you say? Are there . . . other gods?" "Man makes gods for himself; but there is only one true God; He is the God in Heaven and He is a living God. Every other god is dead and false and..."

Little Star's face grew suddenly very sober. "How may I know true God? My people worship Great Spirit but our lives not changed like missionaries' and Shawnda's and Scott's."

Shawnda's heart jumped for joy. Tears bounced off her eyelashes and chased each other down her full, round cheeks. "That is because you have never asked Jesus to forgive your sins and to make you new in Christ. The one you call Great Spirit is really and truly the Lord Jesus Christ. The one you 'ignorantly worship' is the God we're praying you'll come to know and to love and serve."

"When may I know Him? My heart wants Great Spirit inside." Little Star smote her breast with her hands. "I want to be happy -- like Shawnda and Scott."

"You may know Him now, Little Star. This very instant. Come, mother will pray with us..."

When Little Star came out of the missionary's house a short time later, her face was shining. She was saved. Her heart was made new in Jesus and all her sins were washed away.

"I'm so happy, Shawnda," she exclaimed, shedding tears of joy, "And I feel so light and good in here." Her hands covered her heart.

"I'm happy too, Little Star. You are our first convert. Now you must share what Jesus did for you with your mother and father and brothers and sisters."

"I will, O I will. But come, I have news for you."

"You do: Tell me, what is it?" Shawnda clapped her hands together with ecstasy and delight.

"We go find your brother first," Little Star said, linking her arm through Shawnda's. "Tell him, too."

"Oh, do let's hurry, Little Star, for I can hardly wait to hear about it."

"You need to learn lesson from great hawk and wise owl, Shawnda: they wait for good meal. Never hurry . . ." She allowed her sentence to trail and she laughed pleasantly. It reminded Shawnda of a stream laughing and gurgling.

"Chief Great Hawk comes," the Indian lass said, when Shawnda and she were under the tree where Scott was.

"He does! When?" Scott was on his feet now. Chief Great Hawk! Why, he'd been wanting to see the man ever since they landed at the mission station.

"When's he coming, Little Star?" he asked suddenly. "And why?"

"He comes when moon is big, like sun is this morning. He say he must find hidden treasure."

"Hidden treasure? Hidden treasure!" Scott and Shawnda cried out together.

"Where is this treasure?" Scott ventured.

Little Star merely shook her dark head that she didn't know where the treasure was and re-stated emphatically, "But he come!"

Scott stood, thinking. 'When moon is big, like sun is this morning,' Little Star had said. She must mean full moon. Yes, that's what Little Star meant; and full moon was only two nights away. He'd heard his father tell his mother this only last night.

Like one in a dream, Scott raced to the house. Something great and exciting was going to happen. It was. It was! He could feel it!

(See Chapter 3)

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March, 1977

Story 1-c
HIDDEN TREASURE

Chapter 3

Scott and Shawnda could scarcely wait until the moon was big and full and round. What secret did Chief Great Hawk have? And why did he have to wait till full moon to come? Where was this 'hidden treasure' of which Little Star spoke?

As the children walked across the lawn of the mission compound, Scott said with great animation, "Today's the day, Shawnda. If Chief Great Hawk comes, it's to be today. Tonight's full moon. I'm so excited!"

"I am too, Scott. But do you think he'll come? And he's supposed to come here, Did you know that? Only this morning I heard Father tell Mother to make a big pot of beef stew and an oatmeal cake for the chief."

Scott stopped dead still in his tracks and almost dropped the water hose he was using to sprinkle the grass. "You ... heard that?"

"I did. With my very own ears. But now that I know he's to come I . . . I wonder if, really, he will come."

"You talk in riddles, Shawnda. Of course he'll come. Or have you forgotten about the 'hidden treasure'?"

"That's what seems so strange, Scott: what treasure could possibly be hidden around here? Why, except for where we water the lawn and garden, everything else is bone dry, as Daddy says."

"But no treasure is out where everyone can see it; and the Indians have always been known to hide or bury a thing of value. So, who knows where this 'treasure' may be buried!" Shawnda meandered back to the house and played with her dolls for awhile, but no matter how hard she tried to get interested in her toys it just didn't work. Her mind was full of other things -- like hidden treasures.

The supper hour came and passed and no Chief Great Hawk sat as a guest at the missionary's table.

"See what I mean!" Shawnda told Scott as they finished putting the dishes into the cupboard.

Scott merely grunted in disappointment and hurried out to the porch, where he sat on the bottom step to think.

The night was hot and humid and filled with an orchestration of insect sounds. Scott liked this time of day. Somehow, the cicadas' endless droning and the ceaseless chatter of katy-dids wrangling whether katy-did or katydidn't, had a remarkable way of putting his mind at ease. Tonight it did it again, just like always.

Scott sat hunched over, his face resting in the palms of his hands, wondering why Chief Great Hawk had failed to make his appearance at the mission station when a new sound reached his ears.

Quickly he got to his feet and cocked his head to listen. Yes, he had heard it, and it was a muted-sounding, dull thud.

He strained to see but the deep darkness veiled everything from sight.

Scott glanced toward the kitchen door where the soft yellow light of the kerosene lamp glowed warm and friendly-like through the door and curtained window, then he stepped down off the porch to the lawn. Some carefully chosen steps put him beneath the mimosa tree that grew at the far side of the mission station, its feathery looking blossoms tilting the air with a heady-sweet perfume.

He walked quickly away from the beautiful ornamental tree, in the direction of the sound, being careful not to make any noise and staying as far back in the shadows of the trees as he could.

Thinking he heard another sound -- a new sound -- Scott paused to listen, but all he heard was the songs of the night birds and the katy-dids and cicadas.

Again he started stealthily forward. Then he heard it again. It sounded as if someone had kicked, or stumbled, on a stone.

Scott stood deathly still and when he heard the sound again he pressed his back up tight against the bark of a cottonwood tree. Someone was following him!

The boy's breath came out quick and jerky now and his heart hammered inside his chest like a sledge hammer. Oh, if only he could quiet his racing heart. Surely, whoever was following him would hear its noise and discover his hiding place.

He pulled his stomach in tight with an enormous breath and hugged the big tree more tightly with his back until he blended in perfectly with the trunk, then he waited.

A figure darted suddenly beneath the tree -- the very one under which he was hiding. Scott sucked his breath in, quick-like. The person, whosoever it was, stopped and looked around, as though searching for something, or someone.

Scott's chest constricted beneath his buttoned shirt and he felt like he couldn't breathe. He dare not make a sound! No, no!

As quickly as the man came, he was gone. With the swiftness of a deer, he darted from the cover of the tree and was lost in the cover of the night.

Scott thought he would drop from relief and let out a deep sigh just as another figure darted beneath the branches of the rustling cottonwood. Instantly, he was on his guard, making himself as tittle as he could by again taking a great, deep breath and pressing his back tight against the tree's trunk.

The figure, standing not more than six feet away, seemed baffled -- dazed. What's more, it was a girl.

"Shawnda!" Scott whispered, recognizing his sister and suddenly relaxing. "Whatever are you doing out in the dark? And alone, too!"

The girl, not one to miss out on anything, whispered back, "I was following you . . . until some man cut across my pathway. Right in front of me, too! I waited till he was gone then I started after you again. Did you hear what I heard, Scott? It sounds like someone's digging down by the grove of cottonwoods. Oh, it's so exciting, isn't it?"

"I think maybe you'd better go back to the house," Scott whispered. "It's not safe, you out here."

"What about yourself: Are you any safer? And this is flail moon! If you'd walk out in the open it wouldn't be nearly so dark. But no, you go the darkest way," Shawnda said, starting away from the dark shadows to where the moon would expose her presence.

"Shawnda! No! No!" Scott warned. "Come back! Here, under the trees. They must not see you. They must not!"

But it was too late: already Shawnda was darting across the great open place toward the grove of cottonwoods.

(See Chapter 4)

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April, 1977

Story 1-d
HIDDEN TREASURE

Chapter 4

Shawnda ran on and on, feeling carefree and wonderful as Mr. Southwind ruffled her hair and fanned her face. This was the night; she felt it all through her body. And hadn't Little Star told her that she would be with Chief Great Hawk, when he came!

She wasn't afraid -- only of the strange man who ran so swiftly in front of her across the path. Tonight something wonderful was going to happen! Yes, indeed.

She paused every now and again to listen, then, hearing the dull sound more loudly and clearly, she plunged on until she found herself beneath the tallest, stoutest cottonwood of all.

"You have come!" a voice whispered near her.

Turning, Shawnda saw Little Star with her father, Many Suns and her mother, Gentle Fawn. Kneeling on the ground, working fiercely with a pick, was Chief Great Hawk. "What's he . . ."

Before she could ask anything more Little Star's hand covered Shawnda's mouth. "Sh-h. Ask no questions, and talk only like the hummingbird talks. Tonight we find hidden treasure"

Hidden treasure! What was this hidden treasure? Shawnda wondered as the chief continued digging and the little party settled down to silence.

Scott found the group just then, standing in a sort of semi-circle around Chief Great Hawk. Both Scott and Shawnda recognized the renowned chief by his elaborate headdress and garments.

Scott started to say something but was instantly silenced by Little Star and without realizing why, the boy was suddenly caught up in what was going on and stood, silent and almost motionless, watching.

Thud. Thud. Thump, thump, thump, the pick went, eating its way into the packed earth around the root of the great cottonwood tree.

Every now and then Chief Great Hawk stood to his feet and raised imploring hands to heaven.

"Wh... what's he doing?" Shawnda whispered (like the hummingbird) in Little Star's ear. "I mean, why does he raise his hands? He looks like he's praying."

"He is; to the Great Spirit. The God all my tribe believe exists -- somewhere -- but they know not where. I have tried to tell them that I know Him; that my heart is now His throne, but they say it is because I am still a child that I feel this way; that children are supposed to have beautiful dreams. Oh, Shawnda, if only my people had a Bible they could read in their language! I have prayed and prayed for this since I got saved."

"And we have too, Little Star, We must not doubt. Faith brings the Victory!"

A loud shout broke into the whispered conversation. Shawnda looked quickly toward the cottonwood tree and the kneeling form of Chief Great Hawk. By the light of the moon and a piece of dimly-burning punk, she saw him lift a heavy metal box from the earth. His face wore a look of triumph. "At last!" he cried aloud. "We have found the hidden treasure at last!"

Everyone crowded around the great chief as he tapped the rusty lock several times and the lid on the ancient box flew open.

Scott crowded near the chief, expecting to find gold and silver and precious jewels but, alas, to his dismay and surprise, Chief Great Hawk brought out some manuscripts. Great stacks of them. Carefully he laid them on the solid earth then filling the gaping hole with the sweet-smelling dirt which was piled nearby, the chief started to leave.

The little party followed. Straight to the mission compound they marched, the heavy metal chest carried by Chief Great Hawk and Many Suns.

"We find hidden treasure," the chief said to Shawnda and Scott's father. "Yes, we find great treasure; just like mission'er tell my father, Running Water, before he die. For too many years treasure was buried. Hid. My people die and not know true God of which Little Star speak. Read," he commanded Rev. Sparling.

Seeing the carefully written manuscripts of the Bible in the Indians' own language, the missionary and his wife wept for joy.

"Read," the chief implored again. On into the night Rev. Sparling read and as he read Shawnda and Scott fell asleep, but the little party of Indians sat spell-bound, listening to the Word of God read in their own tongue.

The sun was stretching its long, warm fingers over the mimosa tree in the yard and the copse of cottonwoods when finally Chief Great Hawk spoke.

"Is enough," he said, rising and walking to where the missionary sat. "Pray for Chief and Many Suns and Gentle Fawn," he said, tears streaming down his weathered cheeks. "Great Spirit help us find treasure, now Chief Great Hawk find Great Spirit God for himself. His tribe, too."

It was mid-morning when the Chief and Many Suns and Gentle Fawn prayed through to victory. The glory of God shone on their happy faces.

Shawnda and Scott awoke in time to witness the glorious conversions and to hear Chief Great Hawk's story.

"Many moons ago," the Chief said, "A mission'er (missionary) come to my village. He work long hours and for many moons, preaching, and writing Bible in our language. Big Thunder threaten to destroy Bible papers -- he hate mission'er because mission'er say that all who sin must be punished and will burn in Hell fire unless they repent and turn to Great Spirit God and get saved.

"Big war break out between Chief Great Hawk's people and savage tribe across many rivers. Mission'er try to make peace; he was killed. Before spirit left him. he make Chief Great Hawk promise to find hidden treasure. 'buried near roots of great cottonwood tree,' he say.

" 'Beware of Big Thunder!' Mission'er say. 'He hates what I do for you and your people. He wants white man's 'fire water' to stay. But 'fire water' must go if Great Spirit God is to live in heart, "Chief Great Hawk search many moons for hidden treasure; now that he find it. mission'er must have it put in Book so Chief's people can read what Great God say. Chief go now. Take good care of Treasure and be swift like running deer in making up Book."

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Rev. Starling said aloud, "There's 'a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees.' This is just the beginning!"

"And God will take care of Big Thunder!" Scott exclaimed, realizing suddenly that it was Big Thunder who 'passed him last night. The man was out to do mischief of some sort to Chief Great Hawk. he was sure.

"He already has." a voice said from the doorway. It was one of the friendly Indian lads. "Big Thunder die under stars last night of heart attack."

Scott and Shawnda looked at each other. God was working. Mightily so! The revival for which they had all been praying was on its way. It was!

The children sensed it and praised the Lord.

(The End)

* * * * *

May, 1977

Story 2

A LESSON FOR KEITH

"Hey, Morn, where'd my school books get to? I put them on the kitchen table..." Keith was out of breath from his last minute rushing.

"Why not look for them, Keith. I told you more times than I can remember not to put them on the kitchen table."

"But I meant to take them off the table after I played with Tag and I guess we played longer than I thought we would. Tag's a real ball player!" the lad exclaimed enthusiastically. "He catches the ball almost better than any of the boys I know. Dennis said we ought to have him on our side for catcher and outfielder, but Mark said that wouldn't be fair, that Tag would have to catch for their side too, then."

Keith sat down on a nearby chair and scratched his head in a contemplative manner. "Dogs don't play ball, do they, Mother? I mean, would it be fair to have Tag catch for both sides?"

"I can't see why it wouldn't be fair, if both sides wanted it that way," Mother replied, laughing lightly. "But what about the ball after Tag has caught it between his stout teeth? He can't possibly throw it back to the pitcher."

"He runs, Mother. Very fast; and drops the ball at my feet. Oh dear, I hadn't thought of that. Tag should drop the ball at the pitcher's feet or . . ." Keith didn't finish his sentence.

"Tag's just not meant for that kind of ball playing. Now, let's forget all about Tag and get your studies done. Didn't I hear Melissa say you had a spelling test tomorrow?"

Keith moaned. "I hate spelling! Why must boys go to school? It's all right for girls like Melissa and Susie and Janna, but boys... UGH!"

"It's time you learned to like it, Son; and to make the most of your studies. Your grades aren't the best. Have you ever stopped to think what will happen to you if you don't make passing grades this year?"

Keith swallowed hard. He hadn't thought about not passing.

"So far, it doesn't look good for you," Mother was saying again. "And the school year's almost finished, too!"

"Where are my books? I can't find them."

"They're where they were supposed to have been all the time, dear."

Keith hurried to his room and found the books on his desk. He sat down and studied for a while . . . until he heard Dellis McCormack ride by on his bicycle, whistling for all he was worth.

"Hey, Dellis," he called, rushing to the window and waving frantically to his friend, "wait up! I'll race you to the vacant lot..." And in a few hurried bounds he was out the front door and back at the garage where his bicycle leaned heavily against the big maple tree that grew near by.

"Let's go!" he called, racing for all he was worth alongside Dellis, whose sleek, modern bicycle soon outdistanced his.

The boys parked their bicycles next to the willow trees and dropped wearily on to the cool, good earth, laughing and exhausted but happy.

"That was fun!" Dellis exclaimed. "Sure was," Keith replied, the spelling book and history book the farthest thing from his mind; and not until the first faint signs of twilight began to show in the sky in the west did the boys decide it was time to get home.

"Are you through studying?" Mother asked the minute Keith entered the door.

"I...I...I'm going to study... right now," Keith stuttered.

"Get your bath, son. Your studies will have to wait until after you have done what is normally expected of you at this time."

"But, Mother, my spelling test..."

"After you have bathed and dried the dishes and..."

"But it will be bed time then!" "Do as you are told. No back-tall." Keith cast an anxious glance at the grandfather clock as he started for the bathroom. Would he have any time left for studying? he wondered.

He hurried through his bath and, upon examination by Mother, his 'ears were found wanting.' He had to go back and bathe all over again. It was one of Father and Mother's rules...

"What's worth doing is worth doing right." Well, he should have remembered! If he'd have bathed thoroughly the first time he wouldn't have needed this second trip to the tub and this hated encounter with the washcloth and towel! He felt like crying. Everything was going against him!

"Mother! My spelling test!" he lamented, as he dried the dishes.

"You should have thought about that when you were playing ball and riding your bicycle, Keith. Here's a little poem I want you to memorize," she said, sliding a piece of paper in front of her boy.

"I hate memorization! O Mother, please!"

Mrs. Marks placed a loving arm about the shoulder of her slothful boy. "When will you learn to obey, Keith?" she asked with a pained look in her lovely eyes. "What makes it all the sadder is the fact that the Lord wants to help you and you don't allow Him to help. You don't even give Him a chance to bring out all the good and the excellent things in your heart and life."

"I forget so easily. I'm sorry. I am. Maybe if you'd pray with me..."

"Gladly, Keith. But you must learn to pray for yourself too; and then to do. God will never do your studying for you. Ah, no. You must act upon what you know you can do..."

I was when Keith was alone in his own room that he did some real heartsearching. What he saw filled him with fear. He dropped to his knees and prayed. Not mere words, but real praying, and he stayed right there until he knew that Jesus had saved his soul and forgiven him. Then he got up and studied his spelling words until he knew them perfectly.

It was late when he crawled between the sheets and went to sleep, but it was a peaceful, restful sleep.

When Miss Kettering graded Keith's paper the following day, a big smile crossed her face. She could pass Keith now, on to the fourth grade. Almost, she thought she would have to keep him in the third grade for another year. But something had happened to the boy. He was changed. She saw the change and she liked what she saw.

And Keith? He felt a sense of accomplishment and a surge of triumph when he handed his graded papers to his mother. At the top, alongside a big A+, Miss Kettering wrote, "Keep working. I'm proud of you, Keith."

Keith saw something that he had never before seen: Miss Kettering was every bit as anxious and eager that he pass as were his mother and father. It made him want to work even harder.

"Remember that little poem you made me memorize, Mother?" he asked, after she had hugged him for getting his studies. Mother nodded.

"Jesus, and that poem, helped me... as I tried to help myself," Keith said, beaming from ear to ear.

What was the poem? Would You like to learn it, boys and girls? It just may not be a bad idea that you do so. It will help you too. Very much! MR. MEAN-TO has a comrade And his name is DIDN'T-DO: Have you ever chanced to meet them? Did they ever call on you? These two fellows live together In the house of NEVER-WIN: And I'm told that it is haunted

By the ghost of MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN.

Never disobey nor put off till tomorrow what you can do today, dear little reader. It pays to be diligent?

* * * * *

June, 1977

Story 3-a
CRUMBLED RUINS

Chapter 1

Melody Stone sat staring, wide-eyed, at Cecile and Eric Gallic, wondering if her ears had deceived her. No God. Certainly Eric didn't mean it. Why, everybody believed in God, didn't they?

Pulling a clover leaf from a clump that grew nearby, she recalled how excited she'd been when her father had told her, at supper some few weeks back, that they would be getting neighbors.

"Will there be children coming to live there, father?" she asked eagerly, anticipating the joy and delight of going "wild-strawberry hunting" and "blackberrying" with a girl her own age. Her father had looked at her over his coffee cup, his eyes wearing a merry gleam in them. "Would you like some friends, Melody?" he asked, laughing softly and touching the tip of her nose with his index finger.

"O, daddy, there is a girl! There is! I can see it by the look in your eyes! Melody exclaimed, clapping her hands together for joy.

"Not one child, Melody my dear. two -- A boy and a girl." Melody gasped. "A... a boy?" "Well, yes, honey, What's so strange about that? God made boys, just like he made girls . . ."

Melody laughed at her father's comment. "It . . . it's just that . . . Well, whatever will a boy do... with... with two girls? I... I mean," she added quickly, trying to clarify her question, "Well, what boy likes to play with dolls and . . . and have tea parties beneath a lilac or a mock orange bush?"

"Aren't you crossing your bridge before you come to it, little lady?" her father teased.

Thinking back now, to when the Gallics moved into the enormous stone farmhouse whose surrounding fields bordered those of her father's farm. Melody remembered how the big house, empty and vacant for such a very long time, had suddenly seemed to blossom out and come to life again as Mr. and Mrs. Gallic, with Cecile's and Eric's help, painted and cleaned, wall-papered and hung curtains and drapes at the windows and restored the picket fence to its original beauty, each paling seeming to Melody to be a faithful soldier or sentry who stood at rigid attention and duty, guarding the house with tight security.

She was very happy to have two friends with whom to play. Cecile especially, but Eric said such strange things.

Melody was brought rudely back to the present by Cecile's soft voice. There was ever so small a hint of the French accent to it. and Melody loved to listen to Cecile and Eric speak.

"I've asked you the same question three times, Melody Stone," the dark-haired, dark-eyed girl teased, a hint of laughter in her voice, "And you haven't heard a single word I said. Not even one word!" she exclaimed emphatically.

"Oh, uh . . . what'd you say?" Melody asked, shaking her head as if trying to shake Eric's statement out of her brain. "I . . . I'm sorry," she apologized.

Cecile's eyes were big and full and round. There was a merry gleam in them that brightened perceptibly when she talked. "Can't you go for a walk, Melody? There are so many places and things Eric and I'd like to see. Living here's so different from being in a big city."

Melody turned curious eyes on her friend. "You... mean..., you don't... like it here, Cecile?" she asked quickly.

Cecile's laughter was bubbly and light. It reminded Melody of the merry brook that ran through the meadow of their farm. "I love the country," Cecile said quickly "But Eric and I have a lot to learn I wonder if I'll ever get to know as much as you know, Melody!"

"I suppose there's always something new for us to learn, or see and explore. God made so many lovely and wonderful things and . . ."

Eric's dark eyes seemed to flash fire as he interrupted Melody's sentence. "I'd appreciate it if you'd forget about God when we're around!" he said angrily and pointedly. "My dad and mom said there is no God; so, why talk about something that's like a fairy tale? I'm almost ten..." Eric's sentence trailed meaningfully. He felt almost grownup; it was plain to see.

Melody gasped. Straightening her shoulders she looked the boy squarely in the face. With a positive note in her soft voice she said, "That's where you're wrong, Eric. There is a God! He lives in my heart and I love Him very much. He washed away all my sins and saved me, and then He sanctified me wholly. I know there's a God in Heaven! And He's real!"

Eric scowled, then a sneer curled his young lips. It was an ugly looking sneer. It frightened Melody and sent cold chills racing up and down her eight-year-old spine.

"Fool!" he shrieked angrily, getting to his feet and storming away. Tears bubbled up in Melody's blue eyes. Tears for Eric and his lost soul.

Again it was Cecile's voice that brought her back to her surroundings. "Eric has such a bad temper, Melody. You must not say anything to... to... cross him or... disagree with him."

"Oh but I must, Cecile. I must! Especially when I know there is a God and that He's very, very real." Laying a hand upon her friend's arm, Mellody asked quickly, anxiously, "You believe in God, don't you, Cecile?"

Cecile's dark eyes fastened themselves upon the serenity of Mellody's face. In a faltering voice she said, "I . . . I . . . don't know. I used to feel the same way Eric does, but... well, you're different, Mellody. So different. And if there is a God He... He... must be like you... and your father and mother." Hugging Mellody's arm she added quickly, "I like being around you and your parents. None of you ever say cross words nor get angry..."

"That's because Jesus lives in our hearts, Cecile."

"I don't know what it is," the eighty-year-old replied, "but it's beautiful, and I like to come over here. Now, when can you go to the woods with us? Eric's wanting to do a bit of exploring and I'm all for it, too."

"Come back tomorrow. I'll let you know then, the Lord Willing."

Cecile skipped lightly down the earth-packed, sun-baked dirt road toward her house. Mellody ran to the dogwood tree near the pond -- to pray.

(See Chapter 2 -- boys and girls.)

* * * * *

July, 1977

Story 3-b
CRUMBLER RUINS

Chapter 2

Playing beneath the lilac bush with Raggedy Ann and Susie the next day, Mellody heard the low hum of her father's tractor working the land where the Gallics lived. Although Alex Gallic had bought the house, her father owned the farm land.

The Gallics seemed out of place, in a way, she thought They had customs, ways and ideas that were completely foreign to the people in her beautiful countryside. They came from a big city -- to get away from the noise and crime and pollution, they said, but Mellody was sure that they really belonged in the city.

As she poured Susie and Raggedy Ann an imaginary cup of tea, something popped into Mellody's mind. Something she had learned in Sunday School. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." How good Mother's potatoes and meat and gravy tasted when salted just right, she thought, and how flat and peculiar they were without salt! She cuddled the two dolls close to her

heart and sat down on the grass to rock them. Her father and mother and she were Christians, she rationalized -"salt of the earth" -- God must have sent the Gallics to the country so they could learn about Jesus and His saving grace and sanctifying power -- as seen through her parents' lives, and hers. They were a part of Jesus "salt of the earth." She must live very carefully and prayerfully: Eric and Cecile were watching her, she was sure, to see how good and how "salty"-- for Jesus -- her life was.

Still cuddling the dolls, Melody got on her knees. As tears rained down her pretty cheeks she asked Jesus to use her to reach Cecile and Eric for Him.

"Mel-lo-dy. Mel-lo-dy, where are you? We're ready to go to the woods

I'm coming, Cecile. I was giving Susie and Ann their tea before leaving," Melody said, laughing pleasantly as she emerged from beneath the lilac bush.

Kissing Susie on top of her curly head and Raggedy Ann on the tip of her shoebutton nose, the little girl deposited them in their bed on the porch before joining Cecile and Eric.

"Be careful, children," Mrs. Stone warned as Melody stretched herself on tip-toe and hugged her mother, then went dancing merrily down the road with Cecile and Eric.

Eric was in excellent spirits; he even whistled as they entered the mountain. Melody eyed him carefully when he wasn't looking. How very nice he could be, she thought. Eric was almost like two different people. He could be so very, very nice and polite and courteous when everything went his way or he could be just the opposite, like Alexander, the big bull that grazed in the ten acre, fenced-in meadow -- a giant specimen of danger and fierceness when "crossed up" or displeased.

A gentle sigh escaped Melody's lips. How very much like the seventh chapter of Romans was this dark-haired, olive-' skinned boy!

"You tired already?" Cecile asked pleasantly, hearing the soft sigh and giving Melody's hand a little squeeze. "Oh, no: I was just thinking." "Let's take this path I found," Eric shouted from a short distance ahead of the girls. "My, my, what slowpokes you are!" he exclaimed, pausing and looking back to where his sister and Melody were seeming to be having the best of fun.

"Hey, speed it up, you're as slow as the turtle . . ."

"But the turtle won the race, Eric!" Cecile reminded her brother in good humored fashion.

"OK then, shuffle along, slowpokes; I'm going up this path"

"That one goes only a short way, Eric," Melody called after the vanishing figure who disappeared into the mountain. "I know a better way."

"I'm taking this one!" the boy shouted back, his sentence fading with his racing footsteps.

"You may fall into an old mining shaft," Mellody called after him, cupping her hands to her mouth so her voice would carry farther.

Eric's voice sounded faint and far away as he answered, "I'm not a baby, Mellody Stone...."

Eric was angry with her again, Mellody knew. She could tell it by the sound of his voice. Knowing that the Bible said "A soft answer turneth away wrath," she said nothing more. Turning to Cecile she asked suddenly, "What are we going to do?"

"Follow Eric, of course! We can't allow him to get lost or... or... to fall into one of those horrible . . . pits, or whatever you called them. Hurry, Mellody, let's go!"

"It's dangerous, Cecile! Very dangerous. Many, many years ago parts of these mountains were mined. Some of the shafts have never been covered properly. We . . . we may fall into one

"Well, we certainly can't allow Eric to die in one! Alone, too! Come, Mellody, we must follow my brother." Grabbing Mellody's hand, Cecile all but pulled her along the path, into the mountain, calling as she went, "Eric. Eric, where are you?"

From somewhere far above them they heard the faint response. "I'm up here. Say! It's great! Great! Hurry, I'll wait. The air's terrific! Hurry!"

The girls climbed and climbed, pausing every now and then to get their breath, the short, narrow path long since having come to an end and been left behind. Low limbs from trees tugged and grabbed at Mellody's long braids, causing her to stop and untangle her hair from the branches, while underbrush and stones made traveling rough and unpleasant.

"I do wish Eric had listened to me," Mellody said softly.

"Well, he didn't, so we'll just have to keep going. Whatever are these low bushes? My legs are all scratched up and bleeding. That Eric! He's the most stubborn brother in the world, I do believe!" Cecile said in a vexed tone of voice.

"I know a little path that leads straight up the mountain's side, Cecile, It's a beautiful trail. Flowers grow on either side of it and the bushes don't catch at your skirt nor do the tree limbs pull at your hair. Someday, you must go up it with me. Daddy and Mother and I've gone up it many times. We even leave the trail to explore the mountains in that area. I know where I am when I take that path.

Cecile stopped suddenly. Turning, she faced Mellody. "Don't you know where you are now?" she asked quickly, the color draining from her face and her great eyes large and round with fright.

"I... I guess I don't, Cecile. I hadn't stopped to think of it before but..., but no, I don't know where we are. I never came this way before."

Mellody looked stunned at the thought.

"Then... then..., we . . . we're lost!" Cecile cried out. "We're lost! O Mellody! Mellody!"

Mellody made no answer, she was too shocked to speak.

(See Chapter 3)

* * * * *

August, 1977

Story 3-c
CRUMBLED RUINS

Chapter 3

"Hey, you two down there, you comin'?" Eric's voice seemed closer. His shout brought Cecile and Mellody out of their state of shock at the thought of being lost. "Hey, where are you?" he shouted again.

"We.. we're lost, Eric; so are you: Mellody doesn't know where we are. I . . . I mean..."
"C'mon, Cecile, it's great up here. Let pious little Mellody go home to mama if she wants to, I'll take care of you. We'll get home all right -- by ourselves. This mountain's beautiful. I'm going all the way to the top. The higher I climb the more evergreens there are..."

"We'll have to go, Mellody; we can't leave Eric alone. He doesn't know about the..., the .. pits."

"I'm sure he heard me, Cecile. He's just being stubborn and rebellious again. That's all. And the Bible says that the sin of rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft!"

"It... it does? That's even more frightening, Mellody. A witch! Oh-h-h! But come, we must go to Eric, even if he is stubborn and rebellious."

After long, hard climbing and intermittent shouting back and forth, the girls and Eric were reunited. Mellody knew better than to say anything to Eric. She had seen his temper ignite and flare hot too many times over the slightest provocation. She wanted no further display of that wicked thing. It was frightening the way the boy raved and screamed and shouted. She was thankful that Jesus had given her something deep inside her heart that made her want to be a peacemaker. Peacemakers, she knew would "be called the children of God." (St. Matthew 5:9)

Finding wild huckleberries, the three paused to eat handfuls of the delicious, extra-large, blue berries and when Eric started forward once more Mellody noticed that they were no longer climbing but going due west, according to how her father had taught her to calculate time and

directions by the sun. She started to remind the boy of the hidden shafts, but her better judgment bade her keep silent, so she merely followed, her sense of lostness increasing with every step onward and her eyes fixed on the tangled underbrush and bushes through which they were going.

Not until she heard a sort of muffled gasp and moan did she look up. Eric and Cecile were nowhere in sight.

Mellody's face went white and the blood seemed to drain to the bottom of her feet. Had the earth opened, perhaps, and swallowed Eric up because of his rebellion, like it had done to Korah and Dathan and Abiram as told in Numbers 16:1-35? she wondered suddenly. O, it was a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the Living God!

Not knowing what to do, nor which way to turn to find home, she took a few steps forward. The next moment she was half blinded by crumbling earth. Her long braids fell across her face, threatening to suffocate her.

It was some time before Mellody could think clearly again. She came to herself, spitting out hair and a chalky substance and discovering a terrific pain in her shoulder and an ache in her head. After the bright sunlight, filtering through the trees in the mountain, the place where she lay seemed most dim and dismal. A single patch of light above her outlined the hole through which she had fallen.

"Cecile, Eric," she said thickly, finding her mouth dry and speaking difficult. "Cecile -- where are you? Can you hear me? Are you down here too?"

For a moment there was no answer. Then an enormous sneeze came from the darkness beyond Mellody's feet. "Whew! I thought sure I was dead!" came Cecile's voice following the sneeze. "Are you all right, Mellody? Wherever are we?"

Shuffling noises and yelps of pain told that Eric was getting up -- or trying to.

"Don't kick me," Mellody said quickly, finding the words coming easily again now that she knew Cecile and Eric were both still alive and not "swallowed up" and dead, like those three wicked men in the Bible.

As their eyes got used to the dimness they realized that they were quite a long drop from the surface and that there was space around them. A lot of rubble had fallen, but beyond it was standing stone-work.

"Thank God we're not in one of the old mine shafts," Mellody said quickly.

"How do you know we're not?" Eric asked, his tone of voice not nearly so belligerent as previously. "It... it could be a well shaft," he added anxiously.

Mellody and Cecile tried to get up, and found they could manage it. The worst of Mellody's headache was passing, but her shoulder was agony to touch.

"I don't think it's a well," she said shakily. "It's much too wide and there's a stone arch behind you, Eric. I think we're in some sort of cellar."

"Well, the quicker we get out of here the better," Cecile said, her voice sounding a bit shaky and quivery. "I've given myself a dreadful jolt -- by the feel of my knees -- and I guess we'll all ache terribly tomorrow. But isn't it great finding a place like this? Just wait till we tell our parents."

Mellody wasn't so sure that it was "great." She knew it must be getting along toward dinner time and that her mother would expect her home very soon.

"I don't think it's anything so great," Eric said, turning himself round rather stiffly to look at the arch Mellody said she could see. "I thought you were seeing things, because you banged your head, Mellody, but you are right. I see a little doorway. It's nearly buried by rubbish. There's a space beyond that -- I can feel cold air."

"And I can smell it!" Mellody said joyously, walking painfully over to Eric and standing beside him. "Do you know what I think?" she asked. "I think this was once a castle or..."

"Castle?" Cecile gasped. "How exciting! But how are we going to get out?"

"That's where we'll see how great and wonderful Mellody's God is," Eric said sarcastically.

"Oh Eric, I do wish you believed in God, like Mellody does," Cecile said sadly.

"Speak for yourself, little sister. You don't believe in Him any more than I do."

"Yes, I do," Cecile declared emphatically. "Mellody has something you nor I have; I'm sure it's God."

"Then let Him show us how to get out," the boy said quickly.

"God didn't get us in here, Eric," Mellody replied softly, "so why should you expect Him to help us out?"

Eric was silent for a long, long time; when he spoke his voice sounded little and scared, "If He doesn't help us, who Will? We.. we'll die here. We will. We will!"

In spite of his former bravado, the boy began crying and screaming.

(See Chapter 4)

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September, 1977

Story 3-d
CRUMBLED RUINS

Chapter 4

In her heart, Mellody rejoiced. God was humbling Eric. Oh how he needed it. She prayed silently for him.

"We'll die down here! We will!" Eric repeated, acting like a wild man.

"Hush, Eric! You got us in this mess," Cecile chided, sounding suddenly very much grown up. "If you had listened to Mellody..."

"I want out of here. I want out! O God, if you really do exist, help us. Help us!" Eric sounded panicky.

In her sweet, calm way, Mellody said softly.. "Aren't you being a bit selfish again, Eric? Wanting God to help you out, when you've made such sport of Him? Perhaps, if you asked Him to save you and to be merciful to you a sinner, He'd do something for you."

"Anything you say, Mellody. Anything/I can't die: I'm not ready to die! What did you say I should do...?"

In the bowels of the earth Mellody prayed with and instructed Eric and Cecile what to do and soon their cries of fear turned to shouts of praise and rejoicing.

"There is a God! O there is/" Eric exclaimed aloud. "He's living inside my heart." Turning to Mellody, he said quickly, "Please forgive me for being such a bully with you. I hated you because you were so different and so good. I'm sorry."

"It's quite all right, Eric." Mellody exclaimed, wiping happy tears from her eyes. "This is worth everything. And now I'm going to tell you something interesting. While you were screaming awhile ago, I heard a dull kind of echo coming from the archway. That three-foot gap up there has a hole beyond it. Let's try to get up there."

"Could we... pray again, Mellody and ask God to please help us to get out? I'm sure He'll show us how..."

"Oh, let's do! I believe God's going to get us out of here." Cecile's voice rang strong and full of faith.

Mellody's heart was too full of joy to say much as she led in prayer.

After prayer they moved forward cautiously. However hard they tried they couldn't get footholds to advance: the soft loamy dirt piled around their feet in cool little heaps.

"There's no need we try," Eric said at last. "There's no way we can get hold of the stonework of the wall and pull ourselves up if we'd dig through this to the arch. We're trapped in here as neatly as if we were in a giant bottle."

"Well, we mustn't worry," Mellody encouraged the two. "God knows we're in here. The Bible says 'His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him.' Besides, we can't just vanish without a search party coming around pretty soon. One of our neighbors has a couple of blood hounds he uses in his work as County Sheriff. Mother and Father'll tell him about us vanishing and Mr. Selby will put the dogs on our trail."

"I hope they find us soon, Mellody, I'm starved!" Eric exclaimed in a voice that was pleasant and easy to listen to, like Cecile's.

"Those wonderful little berries didn't stay with us long, did they?" Cecile teased. "I wish we'd have filled our pockets with them. They'd sure taste good now."

Mellody laughed. "Let's play like we're exploring a castle," she said. "You see, there really was a castle somewhere in these mountains. One of our neighbors told father that his great-grandfather knew the people who owned it. They lived in it until a jet plane exploded and crashed into it."

"Really and honestly, a real castle, Mellody?" Cecile asked, forgetting that she was in a hole among the crumbled ruins of something or other.

"Say, that's great!" Eric exclaimed emphatically.

"I believe we're in a part of what was once the castle, Cecile and Eric. With the owners killed when the plane destroyed the place and the castle brought to little more than a ruined heap of rubble, people soon forgot all about it and how it had once stood, proud and mammoth and beautiful, near the top of this mountain.

"People who heard about it tried to locate the place where the old castle stood but no one has ever been able to find it."

"And now we're in it! At least a part of it," Cecile said. "O Mellody, this makes it so exciting. A real castle!"

Spurred on by what Mellody said, Eric grabbed hold of a tree root that protruded through the archway and grew above their heads. "I'm going through that hole!" he said with determination, swinging hand over hand toward the narrow passage-way.

Mellody and Cecile held their breath, watching the daring feat with a mixture of pride and fear. Suppose the root pulled loose and the dirt which held it in place came crumbling down upon them and buried them alive!

Mellody folded her hands and bowed her head in prayer. Cecile did the same, and when the girls opened their eyes again Eric was at the small opening of the archway. Digging furiously with one hand and holding on to the tree root with the other, he soon had the opening large enough to wiggle his body through.

"It's over-board for me!" he shouted gleefully, slipping through the archway and disappearing from sight.

"Do you think he'll be all right?" Cecile asked anxiously.

"Since we're not in a mine shaft, nor an abandoned well, I think Eric will make it fine, Cecile. Who knows, he may find something over there to help us out of here."

"I hope you're right, Mellody," Cecile said.

(See Chapter 5)

* * * * *

October, 1977

Story 3-e
CRUMBLED RUINS

Chapter 5

The girls waited and waited but nothing did they see nor hear of Eric for a long time.

"Do you like to sing? Mellody asked, sensing Cecile's anxiety over her brother. Not waiting for a reply she said, "I know a beautiful song." Quickly she began singing,

"Why worry, when you can pray?
Why worry, when you can pray?
Don't be a doubting Thomas
Rest fully on his promise.
Why worry, worry, worry, worry.
When you can pray?"

"That's pretty, Mellody. I like it. I'd like to learn it. And..."

"Hey, you two---" Eric's voice broke in upon Cecile's unfinished sentence. "Grab hold of this pole I'm shoving through the archway: I'll pull you up, and through."

"Hooray!" Cecile shouted, scrambling toward the extended pole and falling over a piece of rubble.

"Take it easy," Mellody warned. "There's too much loose dirt and rubble down here to hurry."

One by one, Eric managed to get the girls up to the small archway opening. It was hard work and when Mellody finally emerged through the hole to where Eric and Cecile stood waiting for her, she laughed out loud. "We're a mess!" she said, looking down at her dirty, torn dress.

"Just look at our clothes! And Eric, your hair's full of cobwebs! O how funny you look."

Cecile and Eric looked at each other then they burst out laughing too. It sounded good, and served as a stimulant after the frightening ordeal.

"Wherever we are, we can move around better here than where we were. Let's investigate," Mellody said. "This is the ruins of the old castle, I'm sure. I believe we may have fallen through one of the six turrets that surrounded the castle and which were a part of it. We'll have to be very careful though and watch for pieces of broken, jagged glass and other sharp objects. We may even find a stairway."

"We could get out of here then," Eric said brightly. "Let's get going. I'm anxious to explore -- even if it is a heap of crumbled ruins."

For hours, the three "explored." Shafts of sunlight filtered through small openings, allowing them to see massive stone walls and numerous archways similar to the one through which they had escaped the bottle-like pit into which they'd fallen, only these inside were larger and more ornate-looking

By late afternoon they were tired, exhausted and famished.

"I've got to rest!" Cecile said tiredly, sitting down on a pile of junk and leaning her back and head against a piece of rotten looking board.

The board gave away instantly, sending Cecile to the bottom of a queer looking shaft. Mellody and Eric stared in awe. Looking over the pile of junk into the gaping hole through which Cecile was hurled, Mellody called, "You all right, Cecile? You're in a dumbwaiter, I do believe."

"I'm all right, Mellody -- except for another bump on my knee and one on my head. But whatever is a dumbwaiter?" Cecile asked quickly. "It doesn't seem dumb to me: It's quite a treacherous thing," she declared, getting to her feet and spitting dirt out of her mouth.

"A dumbwaiter's a small box with shelves, pulled up and down a shaft to send dishes, food, rubbish, etc., from one floor to another."

"Then we must be beneath what was the kitchen!" Eric exclaimed brightly, reaching a hand down and lifting Cecile up to where he and Melody were.

"Look!" Melody shouted. "The pile of junk, i it... it's really kitchen pots and pans, covered with dirt and..."

"They're copper!" Eric said quickly, unearthing a teakettle and numerous other kitchen items.

Carefully the three dug into the mound of junk upon which Cecile had sat, their spirits soaring with each treasure they found.

"How'd you know these things were here?" Cecile asked Melody. "I didn't see a thing and I sat on them."

"I saw the spout of the teakettle first, and then I saw a handle of something else sticking up ever so slightly.

"Listen you two. Quiet! I hear something!"

Immediately Cecile's and Melody's chatter ceased.

"Wh... what is it, Eric? Certainly, no one lives in any part of this mess!" Cecile's eyes were large with excitement and eager delight.

"Sh-h! I hear something!"

"You're imagining things," Cecile whispered, giggling softly. "It sounded like someone shouting."

The girls stopped digging to listen.

"It's Daddy!" Melody shouted. "Here we are, Father."

Immediately Eric and Cecile joined in. "We're down here . . . inside the castle . . . somewhere."

They shouted for joy and the ruins shouted back and forth in a great hollow echo.

"Whew, listen to our echo! They're sure to find us now," Eric said, feeling relieved.

"Where are you?" Mr. Stone shouted.

"Here; Father. Here! Come near where this shaft of sunlight is ..."

"Keep talking. We'll find you. Where are you?"

Nearer and nearer the beloved voice came and when he stood above, where the light filtered through, the children shouted together, "We're down here, Can you get us out?"

"Move back, we're going to dig. We don't want the dirt and rubble caving in on top of you."

Picks and shovels bit viciously into the earth. The shafts of late afternoon sunlight became wider and wider and when the three were finally clasped in loving, waiting arms, and their feet rested firmly on solid ground, Eric spoke up. "I have something I must tell you all," he said.

"I'm a new boy. Something wonderful happened to me down there: I got saved. Saved/I know there's a God, Father and Mother, and I'm going to serve Him for all of my life. He put happiness and peace in my soul. I . . . I'm glad we fell into these crumbled ruins. It made me realize I was lost and wasn't ready to meet God. But that's all changed now. There's treasure in the castle, I'm sure, but I found the most precious treasure of all when Cecile and I found Mellody's God!"

Mellody was laughing and crying for joy.

The End

* * * * *

November, 1977

Story 4

LORI'S THANKSGIVING

Lori stood inside the kitchen window staring outside to where Tami and Ronnie were romping in the snow. It wasn't fair, she thought. It just wasn't fair! Why did she have to get the mumps? WHY? At this time of year especially?

A tear slid past her dark eyelashes and plopped on to the window sill She felt certain-sure of one thing.., there would be nothing (absolutely nothing) for her to be thankful for this month. And to think that someone had named this very special day THANKSGIVING!

She propped her elbows on the window sill and continued to stare and to feel sorry for herself. Why, Grandpa and Grandma Robinson would probably not have a thing to do with her when they came for Thanksgiving Day and found out she had the mumps She'd contaminate them and.., and.., every single one of her cousins!

A hard lump plopped up in Lori's throat. Wherever did it come from? she wondered suddenly, touching her mumps ever so lightly with her hand. She tried to swallow, but still the stubborn lump remained Now she had three lumps instead of the two!

"Lori." It was Mother coming down the hallway to the kitchen. "You must stay in bed, dear. Your fever is too high

"Ye . . . yes . . ." There was that other nasty lump again.

"What are you doing out here in the kitchen?"

"O Mother, I had to see what Ronnie and Tamie were doing; it sounded like they were having so much fun and..."

"Back to bed, dear. Don't you want to get well and be strong when Grandpa and Grandma and all your cousins get here? "

"Ye... yes. But why did I have to get these miserable mumps now? No one will even dare to come near me! They . . . they'll shun me like.., like I have the plague or . . . or leprosy or . . . or something dreadful."

Mother laughed softly. Placing an arm around the little girl's shoulders she said kindly, "If you do as I say, you should be over the mumps by the time Thanksgiving is here. But if you don't, complications could set in and that would keep you in bed a long, long time."

"Can't I play in the snow with Ronnie and Tami? Look at those beautiful big snowflakes! Please, Mother! I'll wrap my old mumps up good and tight in one of daddy's big wooly scarfs and..."

"Don't say another word, little lady. Of course you can't go out and play in the snow. It would make you very, very sick."

"But . . . what can I be thankful for this Thanksgiving Day, Mother? Nothing! I don't like being cooped up in my bedroom all the time and..."

Mother's hand came down firmly upon Lori's shoulder and she began guiding her little girl down the hallway. "Back to bed for my daughter. There'll be other snowfalls; when you're well and don't have mumps and a fever."

"But there'll never be another first snowfall this year and Oh, how I do like the very first one!" Lori was crying now. "Hush, no more back-talk or I'll have to use my persuader. You have so much for which to be thankful. What has happened to your heart, dear? Have you failed to read and pray this morning? We have all been so proud of you and the way God has been helping you. Grandpa Robinson said, 'Lori's heart is like a beautiful garden since Jesus saved and sanctified her. She's so sweet and patient and kind and yields a fragrance like the sweetest smelling flowers in our garden. I marvel at the grace of God that's shed abroad in her young heart and is evidenced so marvelously in her life. I'm sure that the Lord, Who watches the growth and development of her 'heart garden, as she tends and cares for it and feeds it with prayer and Bible reading, is looking on with a big smile of approval on His wonderful face.' That's what Grandpa said, honey. I'm glad he's not here right now to see your frown"

"O Mother, I'm sorry. I am! I didn't mean to sound all ugly and complaining, but I don't like having the mumps for Thanksgiving either. Is this wrong? I... I mean, is it sinful for me to not like having the mumps?"

Mother's laugh sounded like the rippling stream below the house, as she tucked Lori in bed. "Of course it's not sinful, nor is it wrong to dislike having mumps; just be careful that bitterness ... because of the mumps ... doesn't creep into your heart. It is our attitude, and the inner feelings, toward the thing or things we despise and don't like that constitutes the sin. So watch your attitude toward the mumps, honey. Or toward anything else that you dislike. Here," Mother said, handing Lori a pen and paper, "after you've prayed write the things for which you are thankful on this sheet of paper. We all have so many things for which to thank God."

After Mother left the room Lori closed her eyes and prayed for a long, long time. Next she opened her Bible and began reading.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The words fairly popped out at her. God had made this day! Yes, He had. Just the same as any other day and He expected her to "rejoice and to be glad" in it, too!

Lori rolled over on her side. "Forgive me for murmuring because of my ... my miserable mumps, dear Jesus!" she cried. "I... I'm really and truly sorry. Especially since You made this beautiful, snowy day. Tami and Ronnie can play in the snow and I will rejoice because I can see the snow..." Lori sobbed hard, ashamed that she had felt sorry for herself and dared to listen to the voice of the devil. She should have been on her guard by praying and reading her Bible instead of having self pity, even though she felt miserable and dreadful, physically.

But for now and forever..., beginning this very moment..., she would rejoice and be glad in each and every single day. Indeed she would. And that way she would have a Thanksgiving Day all the time! Not just one day out of the year, but 365 days! It was a wonderful thought; one she had never before thought of.

She took the sheet of paper and began to write:

1. I'm thankful because I know Jesus lives in my heart. That was number 1. But there was more to follow.

2. I'm thankful for my Bible and for Mother and Father and for Tami and Ronnie.

3. I'm thankful that (if I stay in bed and don't get a backset) my mumps will be gone by the time Grandfather and Grandmother get here. (Mother says so!)

4. I'm thankful for my pretty room and the flowered wallpaper

A drowsiness came over Lori. It was a good, warm kind of feeling.

She laid her head back on the pillow and was soon sleeping soundly, dreaming that she smelled the delightfully delicious aroma of baking pumpkin pies.

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December, 1977

Story 5 HABITS

Duane ran outside to his very favorite of all places: the big umbrella-like weeping willow tree at the far end of the lawn. Somehow he always felt "hidden away" when he came here. It was his secret hiding place.

He leaned his back up tight against the stout old tree trunk, whistling a soft, meaningless tune, then he suddenly sat down on the soft grass to think.

Whatever did Mother mean about habits and the path? Sometimes Mother seemed to talk in riddles, he thought. Or even in "parables," like Jesus.

Duane heard a happy little "Woof, Woof; Bow-Wow" and lifted his eyes to see Pepper come bouncing under the long, slender willow with to his hiding place. In an instant she was beside him, looking for all the world like she was laughing into his face as she wagged her long, shaggy black and white tail in supreme delight at having found him.

"Pepper!" Duane exclaimed. "Why'd you come down here? I need to think."

"Bow-wow. Bow-wow," Pepper replied, her tail wagging fiercely and her dark eyes full of fun and merriment and mischief. "Bow-wow. Bow-wow," she barked again.

Duane reached over and patted the English shepherd on her shiny, silken head, "I love you, Pepper; you know I do; but I must think. Think.// Think.// Do you understand?" he asked, looking into the dog's face.

"Woof-woof; Bow-wow," Pepper responded, jumping up and down in playful excitement. "Lie down, Pepper!" Duane ordered softly. "I can't play with you. Not now, I must think. Think!" he repeated emphatically, looking into her shiny black eyes.

Thinking Duane was teasing her, Pepper frolicked to the edge of the willow and rolled over and over in the grass, barking short little dog sentences which only she could understand and which she hoped desperately her companion playmate would interpret and come out of his seriousness and romp and play with her. But the boy merely continued to sit -- and think.

"Your heart is beginning to form a path, Duane," Mother had told him just a few minutes ago. "It's similar to the path Pepper has made beside the flower bed at the back of the house..."

Duane scratched his head. Then he gulped. Looking toward the house now, he could see the outline of that path. "Pepper's Path," the whole family called it. He had always liked both the path and its name, -- until just a short while ago.

He gulped again. This time he almost cried when he swallowed and gulped. He knew he shouldn't have taken Stevie's little car home in his pocket (when he left Stevie's house), but he did! And, yes, he did know that he was stealing, he told his heart and his tormented conscience now. He knew it all the time! But a big, strong voice somewhere inside him had argued that no one -- not even Stevie -- would know he had slipped the small matchbox type car into his pocket. And they hadn't known -- not anybody," until Mother found it and asked where he got it. That made things bad. Very bad; for he told a lie to hide and conceal his theft!

Duane swallowed again. A big salty tear slithered from his eye and rolled down his fat little cheek. It seemed to him that God told Mother every single, solitary bad and wicked and evil thing he ever did, else how would she always know when he committed some sin and transgression?

That's when she told Duane about evil habits becoming like Pepper's Path, only the hard imprint would be inside his heart and not on the ground. But his heart would become just as hard and packed-down and barren and desolate-looking as Pepper's Path was hard and packed-down and dusty along the back of the house.

Did he want his heart like that path? he asked himself suddenly. Did he? Why, nothing ever grew on the path. Nothing! It was too hard. Too packed-down. And how did the once-beautiful lawn become a path? By Pepper's small feet going across the same stretch of lawn over and over, again and again and again, day after day after day. That's exactly the way the hard, dusty path was formed!

Duane began to cry. He didn't want his heart to become like "Pepper's Path." O, he didn't! But unless he changed his way of living that's just what would happen. Yes, it would. And with a hard heart, Jesus might never, never speak to him again! O that would be dreadful. He'd go to hell then and lose his soul. He'd be doomed forever; tormented eternally in the flames of hell's fire.

O, he couldn't have that happen to him. He couldn't! He must do something about his soul. Right now, too, while the sweet Holy Spirit was still finding his heart a little bit soft and tender.

Duane got to his feet and started running toward the house. He would take Stevie's little car back to him and tell him how very sorry he was that he had listened to the devil and stolen it; and he would even give Stevie two of his very own favorite cars -- to keep -- for having taken his one car.

He was crying hard now. He ran as fast as his feet would carry him, straight into Mother's open arms.

"I want to be saved!" he sobbed. "I don't want to steal and . . . and lie. Never, never again. I know Jesus can change my heart and make it all new on the inside. Pray, Mother! Please, please pray for me!"

It was a happy little boy with a shining face who, a short time later, walked across the street to Stevie's house with the stolen car and two extras.

How wonderful it was to be forgiven of his sins, Duane thought. And how glorious it would be when he was wholly sanctified and had that "second anchor" about which his father and mother testified and talked.

Whistling joyously, he knocked on Stevie's door.

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THE END