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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1978

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1-a
ECHO CAVE

Chapter 2

Phil yawned and stretched his lanky legs along the thick shag carpet on the living room floor. In utter disgust, he said, "Ugh! What a dull, dull life you and Sandy lead, Sammy! I'm bored stiff! No television, no exciting detective stories and no..."

"Wait a minute, Phil!" Sammy ejaculated, sweetly but firmly slicing into his cousin's unfinished sentence with his own exclamation. "Sally and Mom and Dad and I are really happy and satisfied living the way we do. The reason we don't have television nor any foul detective stories is..."

"I know. I know!" Phil retorted, a bit impatiently. "You feel it's wicked and sinful and evil. You told me all about it when I first came and when I asked you about it. But it's a matter of tastes; a matter of likes and dislikes: I like TV; you don't. "

Sammy, ten years old and ever spiritually inclined said, softly-kind, "It's really a heart matter, Phil. The Bible says, 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' "

"Don't get preachy, Sammy. You know by now that I hate being preached to. Or at!"

"Sorry, Phil, but what I said is the truth,"

Sandy burst into the room then, her tawny hair billowing down her back and her very presence bouncy and bubbly with excitement. "Mother said we may explore Echo Cave today!" she announced importantly, rushing to the clothes closet and taking her warmest everyday coat from a coat hanger. "Now you'll see what real fun is like, Phil," she teased her cousin. "We never get bored around here: there's always so much for us to do or see. We love it, don't we, Sammy?"

"We sure do, Sis."

"And who cares about an old cave!" Phil exclaimed sarcastically, maintaining a stubborn stance and wearing a look of total boredom and unconcern all the while.

"Sandy and I do!" Sammy announced, grabbing his heavy jacket and hurrying after his sister, who was making quick tracks for the outside kitchen door, a sack lunch and a flashlight held tightly in her hands.

"Wait for me," Phil yelled. "I may as well tag along. There's nothing better to do around here and I doubt that I can be more bored in some desolate old cave than I am right here in the house.

"You don't have to come, Phil," Sandy called sweetly across her shoulder. "Not unless you really want to. Better bring a coat if you do decide to come. It gets awfully cold in caves sometimes. Sammy and I enjoy reading on a day like this.., but Echo Cave! Finally, we get permission to go!"

"Reading!" Phil exclaimed, standing still. "What? I mean, what do you have to read?"

"Lots of things," Sandy called, hurrying down the hill. "The Bible, and Christian stories . . . there's plenty of books in Sammy's room. Mine, too. Help yourself."

"Forget it!" Phil stormed. "I'll go to the cave."

Sandy wondered how it could be, that Phil's father was so very unspiritual and sinful when her own dear father (Phil's father's brother) was so Spirit-filled and so holy and God-like. Her parents had taught her and Sammy from infancy to love and reverence and honor God, and in her sixth year of life she was converted soundly and sanctified wholly shortly thereafter. Sammy, too. That was two years ago, she thought happily, rejoicing in the keeping power of God.

Poor Phil. He hadn't had a chance, she was sure. His father and mother were always too busy to do anything with their only child. Quite naturally then, the television set they put in his room became his favorite pastime and "companion."

A tear slid out of Sandy's eye. It was sad. A boy . . . her cousin, and him Sammy's age . . . not to have known what the real love of a father or mother was. Uncle Ed and Aunt Hilda had literally "shipped" Phil to their house ... so they could have "an uninterrupted Mediterranean cruise." Those were Uncle Ed's exact words when he called and said that Phil was on a train en route to their place. They hadn't even bothered to ask-if it would be all right for Phil to come, just said he was coming.

From the first day of Phil's arrival he was bored and pouty and hard to please. Walking briskly toward the cave now, with Sammy and her cousin following, Sandy realized that she and her brother had an obligation to Phil.

She bowed her head in prayer. The day was gray and damp. Dark clouds blew across the sky, threatening at any moment to drop the rain that filled them.

"Better hurry," Sandy called to the boys as she hurried toward the cave.

"Whew! It's farther to that old cave than I thought!" Phil said crossly, huffing and puffing and trying to keep pace with Sammy.

"It's a little over two miles, Phil. A good healthy walk for us."

"Maybe for you but not for me. I wish I was home in my very own bedroom this minute. There's so much for me to do there."

"But this is far better for you, Phil. Far more wholesome and . . ."

"Forget it, Sam! Forget it! I simply can't stand to hear another thing about why your life is so much better than mine. You live the way you want to, but let me live my own life . . . like I want to!"

"Don't say that too often," Sammy warned. "God may take you at your word someday and allow you to do just that., live your own life. O how you'll regret this then. There is no real happiness, nor joy, outside of Christ. Nor any safety either."

"Stop it, Sam! I don't care to hear another thing. My father and mother are making it very well without this., this fanaticism and I can do the same."

Sammy gasped in shock and astonishment. Deciding to say nothing more for the present, he led the way to the cave.

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February, 1978

Story 1-b
ECHO CAVE

Chapter 2

Not used to vigorous walking nor hard labor, Phil's footsteps lagged on the hike to the cave. This cut down tremendously on Sammy's usually rapid pace. On more than one occasion he had to stop and wait for his city-born cousin to catch up with him.

"Go ahead and holler at me!" Phil exclaimed. "I know you want to."

Sammy smiled. "That's where you're " wrong, Phil. I don't have any 'scold' in me since the Holy Ghost filled my heart and life with His sweet Presence. I'm needing some lessons in patience, though, and this is helping me."

"You're really odd. Odd!" Phil retorted irritably.

Sammy laughed pleasantly. By the time they reached the cave Sandy was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's your sister?" Phil asked. "Somewhere inside this cave." "Isn't she scared?" Phil wanted to know.

"Not Sandy," Sammy replied. "She's quite a brave little thing. Sometimes she amazes Mom and Dad... and all of us."

"But a cave...!" And Phil looked apprehensively toward the mouth of the cave.

"O, don't be afraid, Phil. This is just a small cave. Mother wouldn't allow us to go into anything dangerous or unsafe."

"Well, I'm not sure that I like the idea. It looks dark and forbidding,"

"I brought a flashlight, so there'll be light. Come on, let's go!" And Sammy stepped through the narrow mouth of the cave to the dark interior.

Grumbling about the "dumb things" cousins do, Phil followed, all but stepping on Sammy's heels.

"Care to use the flashlight?" Sammy asked generously.

"No, thanks. You lead the way. This certainly isn't my idea of having a good time. It's terribly dark in here and the air smells damp and dank and . . . and musty. "

"Well, a cave isn't the sunniest place in the world," Sammy conceded pleasantly, "but it sure makes interesting and exciting exploring. Just think of it, Phil, years ago robbers and bandits used caves for their hide-outs. And many, many years ago the Christians who were persecuted for their religious beliefs had to worship in caves and dens of the earth; and the catacombs, too."

"How utterly foolish of them to tell anyone they were Christians. If they'd have been silent about their beliefs nobody would have been the wiser as to what they believed and they would not have been punished." Phil replied.

"Christians aren't cowards, Phil. In fact, a real Christian is bold as a lion. Where spiritual issues are involved, especially, and where Christian principle is concerned. Then too, when one is saved.., born again of God!... he can't keep silent: He must share what God has done for him with others or he'll lose his experience. This is called testifying and witnessing."

Phil was silent for such a long time after Sammy had finished speaking that, had it not been for the sound of his footsteps nearby, Sammy would have wondered if his cousin had turned and fled from the cave while there was still time for fleeing. "Sam...?" "Yes Phil?" "Do...do you think...? I...I mean, are..., are you sure there's a God in Heaven?"

"Positive!"

"And... and..., are you sure... He knows we're inside this..., this cave?" "Absolutely sure!" Phil heaved a long sigh of relief. He was scared. Perhaps it would take this to get to his heart, Sammy thought, praying for his cousin's salvation at any cost.

Sammy plodded onward, having the good sense to know when to talk and when not to talk.

After some time Sammy thought about his sister. Cupping his hands to his mouth he called her name.

The walls of the ancient cave picked up the sound and, magnifying the boy's voice many times over, they echoed and reechoed in frightening sound.

"STOP IT!" Phil hollered. "This is scary!"

"Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Scary . . . Scary..." the cave shouted back.

Sammy, amazed at the tremendous sound inside the cave, said, "It is rather frightening, isn't it? I just wonder where Sandy could be," and he probed the darkness with his strong flashlight.

"Look at those spiders, would you!" Phil shrieked, pointing to the wall near where he and Sammy were standing. "O please, let's get out of here!" he pleaded.

"I can't go and leave Sandy, Phil. Worse still, I can't imagine what happened to her. This cave isn't supposed to have any 'side rooms.' " "Side rooms! What are they?" "Some caves..., in fact most caves... have openings leading into other areas. But Echo Cave, it is said, has just one opening . . . the one we came in through."

Phil was shivering with fright now. "But surely, surely Sandy wouldn't have gone into a 'side room' alone!"

"I'm wondering if that isn't what happened, Phil. For if Sandy was in here she would have heard me call and she would have answered me."

"Maybe she's hiding," Phil suggested.

"Not Sandy. She's a real Christian. And she would have answered me if she had heard me call. Sandy's not in here ... in the main entrance, I mean. I'm as sure of this as I am that I'm talking

to you. This cave was never considered important, but now I'm wondering! Where is my sister? There is a 'side room.' I'm convinced of this. And Sandy has found it! Maybe more than one even!"

Phil shivered again.

(See Chapter 3)

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March, 1978

Story 1-c
ECHO CAVE

Chapter 3

Sammy scratched his head and drew his coat more tightly around his body. "It's cold in here!" he said.

"I wish I had listened to Sandy and brought my heavier coat," Phil admitted between chattering teeth.

"How about taking mine?" Sammy asked. "Let's make a swap in here. OK?"

"That's sure generous of you, Sammy. My bones feel half-frozen!" Phil said, taking his thin jacket off and shrugging into Sam's heavy coat.

"Better?" Sammy asked, slipping his arms into his cousin's light-weight wind breaker.

"This feels great, Sam. Great! Thanks."

"We'd better move along then and try to find Sandy," Sammy said, starting forward, praying silently with every step he took and wondering what to do... which way to turn.

They were deep in the heart of the cave now and Sammy, failing to see an object in front of him, stumbled and fell. The flashlight dropped to the floor of the cave and shattered upon the jagged formations nearby, plunging the cave into total and complete darkness, the light's shattering making a fearful and eerie sound. Then all was suddenly deathly silence and stillness.

"Sam! Sam! Where are you?" Phil called wildly, groping in the inky-black darkness for his cousin's hand or his jacket. "Sam! What happened?"

"Oh-h-h!" Sammy moaned and groaned. His leg was broken, he was sure, and his head hurt fiercely from where it had hit something when he fell.

"Where are you, Sammy? And where's the flashlight? What happened?"

"Oh-h-h!" came the muffled moan from the cave floor again.

Phil felt like screaming for help, but the thought of the sound hitting the cave walls and boomeranging back at him in deafening volume kept his lips sealed. Panic boiled up inside him, turning and churning in the pit of his stomach. O, if only he had not come! If only...! Would someone find them before they died and rotted in the miserable cave? he wondered forlornly They would, no doubt, starve to death and their remains would go forever undiscovered. Oh-h, why had he come? Why? "Ph-il?"

"Ye... yes...?"

"I... know you've never..., prayed, but...but will...you try...?"

"Try what?" the cousin asked shakily, not moving a foot lest he become separated from Sammy, whose presence had suddenly become all-important to him.

"Pray... Phil. I... I'm too weak ...to pray, and I...I need help... quick!"

Instantly Phil was beside himself with fear. Suppose Sammy died! Suppose ... suppose...."O Sammy, I'm scared. Really scared We'll die in here, you and I. Only... only I'm not ready to die and meet God. I'm not. I'm not! I... I'm afraid to... to die, Sammy."

"Pray... Phil... tell God all about it..."

Please. Can't you pray for me, Sammy? I've been a miserable sinner! I've said terrible things against God and ... and against you and Sandy and your mother and father. But I'm sorry, Sam. I honestly am..."

"Do you..., mean it, Phil? From the very bottom of your heart?"

"I do! I do! O Sam, if I could be as happy as you and Sandy and your folks are I . . . I'd think I was in Heaven, almost. I know why you're always happy. I knew it all along. But I made things so miserable for you all. I've been terribly mean and hateful . . . can you forgive me, Sammy?

"O Phil, you're forgiven! Yes, yes, yes!"

"Then please pray for me..." "I... I can't get up," Sammy said, trying in vain to raise his body. "But the Lord can hear me every bit as well lying down as when I'm kneeling," and Sammy began calling upon the Lord to save his cousin.

In the darkness of the cave Phil cried unto the Lord and He heard and answered his prayer. Suddenly he began shouting and laughing and crying simultaneously, "It's gone, Sammy! My heavy burden's gone. I'm saved SAVED! Jesus has come and it's not dark in the cave anymore. My heart is full of peace and love and joy. O thank the Lord! Thank the Lord!"

Weak though he was, and in pain, Sammy rejoiced with his cousin and praised the Lord.

A light pierced the intense darkness then and Sandy's voice echoed pleasantly in the cave. "It sounds for all the world like a campmeeting in here," she said, picking her way carefully over the formations of the cave's floor to her brother and cousin "How come you're down, Sammy? and where's the flashlight?"

"We don't need a flashlight right now, Sandy: Jesus just shined His beautiful Light in my heart and I'm so happy I can't contain myself. I just got saved, Sandy, and it's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. O I'm so happy the Lord allowed me to come to your house and.., and into this cave. It' took this to make me realize how terrible it would be to lose my soul.., forever and ever, like you and Sammy told me, but say, can't you do something to help Sam? He's hurt."

"Hurt! What happened?" Sandy asked, looking into the pain-filled eyes of her brother.

"I stumbled and.. fell. Oh-h my leg and my head!"

"I'll hurry home and get Father and Mother," the girl said, locating the lost flashlight and shaking it, trying to make it give light "I guess it's no use," she said quickly, "the bulb's broken in it."

"That's OK, Sandy; Sammy and I'll be here when you get back. I'm not afraid anymore. Jesus is right here with Sam and me. Right now, this very minute!"

"Thank God, Phil! That's the nicest thing you've ever said. I'll hurry along. And when I get back I have to tell you something. I found a 'room' in here... quite by accident. No, there are two rooms. In the room within a room, I found some old wooden boxes with rusty hinges on them. It... it might be gold!" she called, hurrying away.

"I found something better than gold!" Phil exclaimed aloud "Far, far better than gold!"

The walls of Echo Cave picked up the phrase and flung it from side to side: "Better than gold!... Better than gold! ... Better than gold..."

This time Phil wasn't afraid of the voluminous sound: it was as if the whole cave was rejoicing with him.

The End

* * * * *

April, 1978

Story 2

THE GIFT OF WORK

"I wish I was a rabbit," Dennis said glumly to his sister Jane. Stumbling to the shade of the big maple tree he sprawled out on the thick lawn-carpet beneath its umbrella-like branches. "I can't understand why Dad and Mom think the lawn has to be mowed on a certain day each week," he grumbled. "Every week, all summer long, I hear the very same thing over and over again and again; 'Dennis, it's Saturday; mow the lawn..., mow the lawn..., mow the lawn . . .'" He parroted his parents' orders in a not-too-pleasant tone of voice, repeating the phrase like a broken record as he roughly brushed a hand across his wet forehead and wiped the falling perspiration away.

Jane sighed. Pausing momentarily from snapping beans she said, "I know what you mean, Denny. Sometimes I wish I was a bird; so I could fly away: when I hear Mother coming to tell me she has something or other for me to do. Look at these beans, would you! A whole bushel of them for me to snap and to clean! "

"At least you can sit down to do your work," Dennis said. "And in the shade at that! Me, I'm in the baking-hot sun 'most of all the time. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth; push, push, push! Ugh! I do wish I was a rabbit!"

Jane looked curiously at her brother. "Why a rabbit, Denny? Why not a bird?" she asked, looking toward a limb on the tree where a robin's song filled the entire yard with the sweetest kind of melody. "Rabbits can't sing; birds can. I'd rather, any day, be a singing robin than a hopping rabbit!" she added quickly.

Dennis flopped over on his stomach. With his face propped in his hands, he said, "Maybe a rabbit can't sing, nor fly, but he can run! And I mean run! Then, too, rabbits eat the grass, not mow it. And they can hop and frolic and play in the meadows all they want to. When they're tired, they find a cool, shady fern-bed, or something similar, and rest; and nobody bothers them. O I wish I was a rabbit!"

"Now isn't that something!" a voice exclaimed pleasantly, nearby. "A certain boy wishes he could be a rabbit. My, my, my!" and Uncle Carl seated himself on the ground between the two children.

"Well, I mean it!" Dennis declared emphatically. "I'm tired of mowing this old lawn. Rabbits don't have to do such crazy things. Just look at this lawn, Uncle Carl: I mowed it only last week and now I'm doing it all over again. This is what I call stupid! It.. it's boring and ... and monotonous, to say the least!"

The aging man picked up a handful of beans and began to snap them, being careful to cut the end off with his ever-sharp pocket knife. His sky-blue eyes twinkled merrily and his mouth wore a pleasantly-twisted half-smile. "So you'd like to be a rabbit, eh?" he asked.

Dennis nodded his head in agreement.

"I think it would be much nicer to be a robin," Jane admitted. "If I were a robin, I could fly high into the sky and sing all day long. I'd never have any old beans to string and snap and..."

"Wait a minute. Wait a minute!" Uncle Carl exclaimed. "You and Denny enjoy eating the beans when winter's here, don't you?" he asked.

Jane's cheeks flushed scarlet.

"It's hardly fair," Dennis grumbled. "Jane and I must work while all our friends can do as they please on Saturday."

"Is that so!" Uncle exclaimed. "My but you're lucky! How very thankful both of you should be . . . that your parents care enough about you to teach you to work."

"I hate work!" Dennis stated flatly. "Then you hate that which God decreed when He drove Adam out of the Garden of Eden. Well, in that case I guess I had better hurry inside and tell your mother not to prepare any dinner for you." And Uncle Carl stood to his feet.

"No dinner! What do you mean? I'm starved! And it's been less than two hours ago that I had breakfast, too!" the boy lamented.

"The apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Christians that, '... if any would not work, neither should he eat.' II Thess. 3: 10."

Dennis gasped; Jane looked shocked. "Did . . . did . . . does it really say that?" Jane stammered, after her initial shock wore off.

"It certainly does."

"I... I'm sorry, then." Dennis said, shamefacedly.

"Me, too," Jane added

Seating himself once more on the ground, and helping with the beans while he talked, Uncle said, "God knows what's best for man. Since the fall in the garden, He planned that man should work. Ecclesiastes 5:12 tells us, 'The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.' "

"Well, I sure sleep well at night after I've worked hard all day," Dennis admitted to his uncle.

"Me too," Jane said. "I guess I never thought of work as being a gift from God."

"Uncle Carl didn't say it was a gift, Sis."

"But Ecclesiastes said the sleep of a working man was sweet, so that makes it a gift from God. Anything good like that is God's gift."

"I guess I hadn't thought of it in that way, Janie dear; but you're right," Uncle Carl replied. "We might even be able to say that work is God's 'sleeping gift' to man. Now, back to being a rabbit, or a robin: they work. Watch the parent robins when they have a nest full of babies: it's work, work, work, from dawn to dark for them."

"And they must search for their food," Jane said thoughtfully. "Every single bite of it. On second thought, I wouldn't want to be a robin. I'm glad God made me a girl instead."

"And I'm glad I'm me!" Dennis said, getting to his feet. "As soon as this lawn's mowed I'll have some apologizing to do to Father and Mother and, then I'm going to have a prayer meeting."

"That's the boy!" Uncle exclaimed, beaming proudly at his nephew and niece. "You have wonderful parents," he declared. "By making you learn to work now, they are preparing you for your respective roles later on in life. Their gift of work to you is a blessing in disguise, and I dare say that some day you are going to thank them over and over for this."

"Thanks, Uncle," Dennis said, starting the lawn mower. Calling across his shoulder, above the hum of the motor, he said, "I'm sure glad now that God didn't make me a rabbit!"

* * * * *

May, 1978

Story 3
POISON IVY

The woods at the far end of the pasture was clothed out beautifully in fresh green leaves and adorned with dense ferns. The grapevine, which had been naked and bare and desolate looking all winter long, now sported a new jacket of rich green coloring, its springy, vining, twining arms stretching far up into the stout branches of the sturdy oaks and beeches, clinging tenaciously to them and, at the same time, affording an open invitation for venturesome boys to swing from them.

Jeremy Dalton, whistling a merry little tune, trudged excitedly down the dusty lane that bordered the woods, a long, lithe cane pole dangling carelessly over one slender shoulder.

"A fine day for fishing!" he said to no one in particular, parroting his grandfather's statement made to him at the breakfast table that morning.

A big green grasshopper jumped across the road in front of him and Jeremy, full of imagination and childish dreams, paused and spoke to the excited insect. "You needn't be afraid of me," he crooned. "I won't hurt nor harm you, little elf. You see, you're my little green elf, and I like you." He stooped down and looked intently at the grasshopper whose state of confusion was all too evident. "I'm going fishing," he said. "Want to go along? Here, ride with me on my hand. That's

a whole lot easier than hopping and jumping and... Hey! Stay with me! Stay with me!" Jeremy exclaimed as the grasshopper, in one great long jump, hopped quickly into the grass and was gone.

Jeremy stood, watching the grass and hoping his imaginary 'green elf' would reappear. When the insect failed to show himself the boy trudged merrily on his way, whistling his pleasant little tune.

He lifted his eyes as a bluebird flitted above him and that's when he saw it: "A grapevine!" he shouted, dropping the fishing pole and can of worms on the ground and rushing headlong through the leafy underbrush and climbing gingerly up the springy vine.

"Whee-ee! Whee-ee!" he shouted, taking hold of the loose end of the vine and swinging free from the trees out over the bushes and underbrush beneath him.

Jeremy felt free. Like the birds that flew above him in the sky, free. He felt happy, too. Very, very happy. "Whee-ee! Whee-ee!" he shouted again, swinging back and forth, back and forth.

The morning sun moved slowly across the summer sky until it stood straight above Jeremy's head and the swingy, springy grapevine; still the boy swung, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, over the tallest bush and scrub tree and over the graceful swaying ferns. His stomach announced to him that it was dinnertime but the little boy preferred swinging to eating the sack lunch that grandma had packed for him to eat on the banks of the cold, clear stream.

His chubby fingers began itching dreadfully..., and suddenly. His arms, too. What could be the matter? he wondered, clambering down the long vine to the ground and gazing at his hands. They were all lumpy and bumpy and red! And they itched! Oh how they itched! Jeremy began scratching. The more he scratched, the more he wanted to scratch. Whatever was wrong with him? What did he have? he wondered, looking puzzled and perplexed as he gathered his fishing paraphernalia together and headed back to the big farm house and to grandma's waiting arms.

"Why Jeremy Dalton, whatever is wrong with you?" Grandma asked, taking the long, lithe cane pole and can of fishing worms from the boy's hands. "You're all swollen, little man! Look at your hands and your arms! And your face, too...!"

Jeremy was almost ready to cry. His eyes felt like little slits in his head and his hands hurt and stung and burned so badly that he could hardly open and shut them. "I . . . I'm dying, Grandma!" he cried aloud. "I can't see you very plainly anymore; and my hands and arms, how they sting and burn me!"

Grandma scrutinized the little boy carefully, her loving arm resting softly and gently on his shoulder. "You're not dying, dear little fellow," she consoled Jeremy in a reassuring tone of voice, "You do have a full-fledged case of poison ivy, though," she added, looking tenderly into the pair of blue eyes that were upturned to her face. "You must have gotten off the path..."

"O Grandma, I forgot," Jeremy confessed as tears spilled down his ruddy cheeks and fell into grandma's apron. "I didn't mean to disobey. Honestly I didn't: I forgot all about what you said when I saw the grapevine." His voice trailed.

"The grapevines, huh?" Grandma said. "My, my, it's too bad you forgot, Jeremy dear. Too bad! It's full of poison ivy in the woods by the grapevines. I'm afraid you'll suffer quite a long time for your disobedience, little man."

Jeremy buried his swollen face in grandma's ample apron. "One little sin!" he wailed, feeling wretched and miserable and ill.

Grandma tilted Jeremy's face upward. "No sin is little, sweetheart!" she told him. "Each and every sin one ever commits is always big and great and hideous. It was because of sin..., all kinds of sin!..., that Jesus was nailed to the cross. All sin is terrible!"

"I need to know that Jesus forgives me, Grandma," Jeremy lamented. "I'm so sorry I disobeyed Him; and you. Will you forgive me, please?"

"I freely forgive you, my dear. Freely forgive!"

Jeremy hugged grandma tightly then he said, "Pray for me, will you Grandma? I want to know that Jesus has forgiven me too."

A short time later, with his sins forgiven and his heart made white through Jesus' blood, his itching having been somewhat soothed and eased by medication, Jeremy laid down on the cushioned porch swing and, with the gentle breezes fanning his swollen face and hands, he was soon sleeping peacefully, dreaming he was once more swinging from the springy grapevines in the woods only this time it was being done with the beloved grandparents' permission and supervision!

* * * * *

June, 1978

Story 4
QUICKSAND!

The soft warm breezes of June blew gently across Sandy Point, shaking the long slender blades of tall grasses that grew thick and dense in the dunes. Randy Scott, his pants cuffs turned up several turns, whistled a merry but meaningless little ditty as he darted across the white sand with Pepper, his faithful dog, tagging close by his side.

Gulls meowed and cheeped and screamed overhead and from a nearby dune a pair of larks soared upward, flinging a beautiful song to the wind, the sea and the sky. Nine year old Randy, already an avid bird watcher like his father and grandfather, stood dead-still and watched the larks as they soared higher and higher and were soon lost to sight.

"They sure know how to make beautiful music!" he exclaimed aloud to Pepper, who wagged her long black and white plume-like tail fiercely as if to say, "I agree. I agree!"

Randy loved Pepper. She understood every single thing he ever said to her and told her. At least, he felt she did. She was a smart dog, even if they didn't have any papers to prove it. Who needed a piece of paper to prove what a dog was or was not? he thought quickly. He knew that Pepper loved him and understood him, and that was proof enough that she was smart and intelligent, was it not?

A long-legged sandpiper darted across the sand in front of Randy. Pepper, barking loudly and shrilly, took off full-speed after the little creature whose legs functioned with almost jet propulsion.

"Pepper! Pepper, come back!" Randy called, frantically pursuing the dog and the rapidly disappearing sandpiper... over the sand, through the tall grasses, around the rocks.

Randy's breath came out in tight, short gasps and his chest hurt from running so fiercely. "Pep--per! Pep--per!" he called, trying to make his voice reach the ears of the faithful dog whose bark was now little more than a faint, far away echo-sounding thing.

On and on Randy raced, totally oblivious of his whereabouts and his surroundings. His running became suddenly labored and most difficult like his feet were stuck in glue or sticky paste. "Pep--per!"

The mere exertion of calling the dog's name seemed to plunge Randy's feet deeper into the sticky, sucking sand.

Quicksand! He was in quicksand! Panic boiled and churned inside his chest like the waves that crashed upon the rocks along the shoreline. He knew that unless God provided a way of escape for him he was doomed.

Standing very still now and looking about him, Randy saw for the first time the many signs posted around the area: KEEP OUT, one sign warned, while another read, DANGER -- QUICKSAND.

The boy shivered with fright. The warnings were there all the time, he realized, but he .had been too preoccupied with following Pepper and the sandpiper to pay any attention to the life-preserving signs around him. They were put there by concerned people to save his life. And he had rushed past them to his own destruction!

A tear slid out of Randy's eye. Then another and another. His feet were sinking in quicksand, it was true, but worse than that was the knowledge that his heart had long ago begun sinking in quicksand... sin's quicksand! It all started when he had taken Jonathan Smith's big turquoise marble and hid it way down deep inside the drawer where he kept his socks and his

underwear ... then lied to Mother about where he got the marble. (When she discovered it in his drawer!)

That was the awful part about sin, Randy thought now, struggling to free his feet: One sin made you commit another -- to cover up for the first sin you committed.

From deep inside his heart, the boy groaned and cried aloud to God, "O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! Save my soul! I'll confess everything to Mother and I'll take Jonathan's marble back to him. Please, please save me..."

How it happened, Randy never knew. But it did happen: In an instant of time his load of sin, and his guilt, was gone. He knew that Jesus had come into his heart to reside and abide. He was so happy that he cried aloud for joy, and when he opened his eyes and rubbed the tears away with his fist, he saw a tall clump of stout looking grass growing in front of him. Where had it come from? he wondered. He was sure it hadn't been there before. Did God send it to help him escape? It was a miracle, he thought. Just like the miracle of salvation in his heart.

Praying fervently, he took hold of the grass. It was strong and well-rooted. Straining with all his might, Randy was soon free and standing on firm sand beyond the danger signs. "Thank You, Jesus dear," he said with face turned heavenward. "Thank You for saving my soul and for saving my life, too. You did a double work for me today. Now I need the double work of heart Holiness in my heart and then I'll be able to be like the apostle Paul... bold and powerful and fearless."

The warm sea breezes ruffled Randy's red-brown hair as he started homeward. He had a restitution to make to Jonathan and a confession to Mother and the sooner he got it out of the way the better it would be.

The sea gulls meowed and screamed and screeched above him. Randy was sure they were praising the Lord with him. At least it sounded that way to his happy heart ... his heart that was now in tune to heavenly music.

* * * * *

July, 1978

Story 5
EXPOSED

"Now you sit right here, Peggy dear, and be a good girl till I get back from the garden," Margaret Ann told her beloved, home-made bean doll as she placed her tenderly and lovingly in one corner of the porch swing. "You've been a wonderful baby today," the little girl commented, kissing the button nose of the doll and pushing the swing ever so gently to rock her baby.

Margaret Ann hurried across the porch to the clematis vine that grew over the arbor at the far end of the lawn. Beneath the vine, the little girl gathered her imaginary peas and corn and potatoes for Peggy's and her dinner, putting them carefully in her apron, just like she had seen

Mother do time and time again as she carried the tasty vegetables to the kitchen for washing and cleaning and cooking.

"My Peggy's a very good baby!" Margaret Ann exclaimed aloud to an imaginary-pretend other little mother. "You say your baby cried all night!" she continued. "O dear, O dear, that's too bad! Did she have colic? I know how hard it is to sleep when one has a stomach-ache. I ate chocolate ice cream one night and..."

"Margaret Ann, whoever are you talking to?" Sally asked, coming across the lawn. "And where did you put my hair brush? I told you never to bother with my things."

"I didn't have your hair brush, Sally. Honest I didn't."

"Don't tell me that!" Sally snapped. "You had to have it. Hair brushes don't have legs and walk away. They don't disappear by themselves."

"But I didn't have it, Sally. Honestly and truly, I didn't. You told me not to touch it even, and I haven't."

"Come, come now! I know better than that! I want my hair brush before noon or you'll pay for not returning it. I told you never to brush Peggy's hair with it... Mother used crochet yarn for her hair and that messes my brush all up. You know that," Sally scolded crossly, marching importantly across the lawn toward the kitchen.

Margaret Ann sighed heavily, then she spoke to Melanie, her pretend friend. "You know," she said "I worry about Sally. Why? O Melanie, surely you've noticed her bad spirit! And, really, I haven't even been near her brush. Since Jesus saved and sanctified my heart, I enjoy being a peacemaker ... like Matthew 5:9 tells us to be. So you see, Sally's quite wrong; about me having taken her hairbrush, I mean. Well I'll have to get back to the house and feed dear little Peggy or she'll be getting colic from an empty stomach. It's been nice talking to you, Melanie. Come over again sometime And, O yes, I do hope your little girl gets to feeling better..."

Holding her apron together the way she'd seen Mother do when she came in from the garden, Margaret Ann hurried along the path to the porch, laughing pleasantly and bubbly-like and calling, "I'm here, Peggy dear. Mother's going to feed you right now. Were you terribly hungry? . Peggy! PEGGY! Where are you?"

The folds of the little apron dropped loose and fell smoothly over Margaret Ann's dress; her mouth opened wide in astonishment. "Peggy, where are you?" she cried. "OH-H Peggy, what happened to you?"

Running quickly into the house to Mother, the brokenhearted child cried, "Mother! Mother! Peggy's gone. She's gone! I put her on the porch swing and when I came back from the clematis vine she was gone. Someone took my baby doll. O Mother, she'll miss me! She will!"

"That's strange, honey," Mother consoled and soothed. "Who would take Peggy? I made her for you, and filled her with beans. I can't imagine anybody wanting a bean doll!"

"I did, Mother! And I loved my Peggy. But she's gone, Mother! Somebody stole my baby." Margaret Ann was sobbing brokenly now.

"Sally," mother called. "Sally, did you see Margaret Ann's doll?"

"What would I want with her doll?" Sally replied crossly. "But she took my hairbrush!" she snapped, pointing an accusing finger at the weeping Margaret Ann.

"I didn't, Mother. I really didn't. I haven't even touched Sally's hairbrush since she told me not to."

"Don't act so self-righteous, little sister!" Sally retorted hotly, stomping her dainty foot and rushing away.

Margaret Ann searched and searched for her beloved Peggy but the cuddly little bean doll was gone. Lost! To replace her, Mother made the little girl another Peggy; this one a bit larger and even more beautiful than the first Peggy.

Working in the garden several weeks later, mother noticed a strange sight . . . a very, very strange sight. A thick patch of beans was growing in one corner of the moist, fertile soil and they were growing to the exact shape and dimensions of the first Peggy!

"Sally." Mother called her oldest child's name loudly. "Sally, come here."

"Coming Mother What is it?" Leading the girl to the corner of the garden and pointing to the telltale beans, Mother said, "Your sin has found you out, Sally. You took Margaret Ann's doll and buried her! Why?"

"Because . . . because . . . I thought she had taken my hair brush and used it on Peggy's wooly head and then hidden the brush."

"And when you found your hairbrush.., just where you had put it ... why didn't you tell Margaret Ann that you were sorry for accusing her falsely? And then why didn't you confess your sin.. about what you had done to Peggy? Sin will always find one out, Sally. Here's proof that yours is not covered nor concealed. You do know that your wicked heart will land you in a devil's hell and in a Christless eternity unless you repent and get things all fixed up with God, don't you? You've practiced deceit and..."

"Stop it, Mother! Stop it! I'm guilty. GUILTY! I feel so miserable and wretched. I want a new heart... like Margaret Ann has. Pray for me..."

The cool, damp soil became Sally's altar; and there in the garden, among the vegetables and flowers, the loving Saviour gave her a brand new heart . . . a Bloodwashed, born again heart.

Shouting for pure joy and happiness, Sally raced to the house to find Margaret Ann. She had a restitution to make to her little sister. Best of all, she wanted Margaret Ann to know that she was new on the inside, also.

Sally's feet fairly raced toward the house now.

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August, 1978

Story 6

DONNIE'S TEMPTATION

Donnie jumped up and down with glee; he clapped his hands together in delight. "Thanks, Morn, thanks, Dad. I can hardly wait to get to Grandma's house," he said, beaming brightly. "I'll be good. I promise."

"And always remember to tell the truth, dear little boy," Mrs. Haskins said, hugging her boy to her bosom.

"I will. I will! And I'll pray every single day, too," Donnie promised as he got inside Grandpa's car and sat up big and straight and tall on the seat.

"Grandma and I'll take good care of Donnie," Grandpa said as he started the car. "Don't worry about him. It's time I had a boy around the farm again." He winked at Donnie. "And Grandma needs somebody to help her gather the eggs and to bring vegetables from the garden. Yes, Donnie's the very boy we need. And I'm sure glad he belongs to us! Well, we'd better get moving. Grandma'll be waiting for us."

Donnie felt big and quite grown up sitting next to Grandpa. He pretended he was even now sitting on the seat of the big red wagon Grandpa used for hauling corn into the barn. But this time he had the horses' reins in his very own hands and he was guiding Pet and Bill down the lane toward the farm.

A smile played across his face. "My, you look pretty, Donnie!" Grandpa said, reaching over and patting the little hand close to his. "I've always said that a smiling face is just like bright sunshine after a dark, dismal day, and today I'm more sure of it than ever before. Know something, dear little boy?"

"What, Grandpa?" Donnie sat on the very edge of the car seat now and looked into Grandpa's merry eyes.

"You are like sunshine to Grandma and me, and we're so happy that you got saved and sanctified in this recent revival meeting in the church."

"I've been so happy since Jesus has all of me!" the little boy exclaimed joyously. "It's almost like there's never been a devil who once controlled my life; that's how happy and good and wonderful and clean my heart feels."

"But there is a devil, Donnie. Beware! He'll be around to tempt you one of these days. Sure as I'm Grandpa Haskins, he will! Don't let a single day go by without praying talking to God through Jesus' name -- and be sure to read your new Bible too. Every day."

"I've been, Grandpa. Some of the words are a little hard to pronounce and to understand, but I ask Jesus to help me and He does. And it's making me a better reader in school, too. I'm sure I'll get a bunch of A's on my report card when school begins in September, the Lord willing."

"The Bible's the most excellent book in all the world, little one. It's the only book that teaches you how to live holy and righteously and upright. It tells you what's wrong with your heart and it tells you what to do to get the 'wrongness' fixed up and taken care of; and, as you said, it will help you to read and spell more excellently. I love my Bible, Donnie. It's the Christian's sword, and his 'shield' against the wiles of the devil. Always remember this. Better still, always use it!"

"I promise, Grandpa," Donnie said as the car turned into the lane and Grandma met them at the picket gate and lovingly ushered him inside to the food-laden kitchen table, where he ate too much. He felt like he was stuffed.

Being with Grandpa and Grandma was the nicest thing in the world, he thought, and the days that followed were happy days, full of work and play and rest. Donnie was Grandma's helper and Grandpa's "right hand man," -- Grandpa's exact words. He learned how to help turn the heavy handle on the screwed-to-the-floor machine that shelled corn and he helped Grandpa with the hay. He even learned how to milk the cows and how to feed the pigs. Oh, work was wonderful! Grandpa made it seem that way.

He picked beans and peas for Grandma and he helped her wash and dry the dishes, but he liked best of all to gather the eggs from the hen-house.

He started out one fine summer day with the egg basket held securely in the crook of his arm. The chickens seemed happy and glad to see him for he always sang to them. The basket was almost full when something happened -- Donnie stumbled and fell. Eggs flew in every direction. He felt like crying. Those big, beautiful eggs were ruined. Wasted! And all because of his carelessness.

"Don't tell your grandmother, Donnie," a voice whispered ever so loudly to his soul. "If she asks why you brought so few eggs in, just say there were no more."

Donnie stopped dead still. The Devil! That was the voice of the Devil! And he was suggesting that he lie!

Cold chills raced up and down his little spine. He felt hot, then cold. He looked at the awful mess of broken eggs and his eyes filled with sudden tears. What would he do?

"Stop worrying!" the tempter commanded. "Clean the mess up and just tell her there weren't many eggs today."

Donnie gulped. He had never (knowingly) told a lie, but now... now . . .

"Go on, Donnie! Get busy, and do as I say," the voice urged.

Again Donnie looked at the broken eggs. Then he made a quick decision: he ran, as fast as his legs would take him, to the kitchen where Grandma was busy baking bread and pies.

"I'm sorry, Grandma!" he cried. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do it! Really I didn't! But I..."

Wiping her hands on her apron, Grandma threw her arms around Donnie's trembling shoulders. "Stop crying," she soothed softly into the little boy's ear, "and tell me what happened. I'm sure you didn't mean to do whatever it is you did, so dry your tears and tell me all about it."

"I broke the eggs. But I didn't do it 'cause I wanted to. I stumbled and fell and they flew every which way. Oh Grandma, the floor of the hen house is a mess -- all those broken eggs! I'm so very sorry. I am!"

"Of course you didn't mean to do it, honey. Forget all about it. There'll be more eggs later on today. But why did you tell me, Donnie? I might never have known if you hadn't told me," Grandma said, with a wise look in her searching eyes.

"'Cause God knew I did it! He saw me; and I knew. The Devil told me. not to tell you -- for me to say there weren't many eggs. But I wouldn't lie, Grandma. I've had peace since Jesus came into my heart: I want Him to stay with me forever. I don't want to grieve Jesus, nor make Him ashamed of me. I love Him very much. I ran, Grandma, when the Devil almost insisted that I do what he had commanded. It frightened me terribly. Then I remembered that the Bible said for us to flee certain things, and to 'resist the devil' and he would flee from us. That's when I came straight to you."

Bright tears glimmered in Grandma's eyes. "You have made me very proud of you today, dear little grandson; and our Heavenly Father, who sees and knows everything we do and say, is smiling down upon you in loving approval and favor. You've resisted the devil and overcome temptation today. This victory will make you stronger to overcome the next onslaught and attack of the enemy of your soul. Pray much, and stay close to Jesus. With Jesus you will always win a mighty victory over sin. And now, let us kneel together and thank God for helping you to triumph."

Obediently, Donnie fell on his knees, a great big "Thank you, God!" in his heart and on his lips.

* * * * *

September, 1978

Story 7

SHADOWS ON THE WALL

Trenton and Jennifer lay close beside Grandma. The lights inside the room were all turned out, but the lights from the lawn outside showed clearly the outline of each and every piece of furniture in the motel room.

"Tell me a story," Trenton said, sighing tiredly and snuggling closer to Grandma's side,

"Me a story too," Jennifer piped in her dainty little voice as she wiggled her petite body into the cradle of Grandma's arms and lovingly wound one of her tiny arms around Grandma's neck. "I love you, Grandma," she said, patting the older woman's face affectionately.

"Sh-h Jennifer!" Trenton said. "Grandma's going to tell us a story. You must be real quiet or you'll not hear it at all."

"Once upon a time," Grandma began.

"How come you always say, 'Once upon a time?' " Trenton asked quickly.

Grandma laughed. "I don't know why," she said softly. "Unless it's just that this is the way most stories begin. But you've given me something to think about, dear."

"It really doesn't matter;" Trenton admitted quickly, "just tell me the story."

"Long, long ago..."

"How come it's 'Long, long ago' now, Grandma?" the six year old asked this time.

"Because it happened a long time ago, dear. But say, I believe my little grandson has the question pox."

"What's that?"

"You heard of the chicken pox," Grandma said, laughing pleasantly.

"I had them! Did I ever itch!" the boy exclaimed.

"Well, the question pox fills your mind till you can't listen. You must ask questions and more questions and more questions. See? But I don't mind. This is one way of learning, little darling."

"Me quiet," Jennifer remarked sleepily, sighing softly and sweetly content in the curve of Grandma's loving arm.

"You're very quiet, little sweetheart!" Grandma complimented.

"Make doggie on the wall," Jennifer begged between yawns.

"O yes, please do, Grandma!" Trenton exclaimed enthusiastically. "You can tell the story after you've made shadow pictures for Jennifer and me. I love to watch the animals move and wiggle."

"All right," Grandma replied, lifting her hands and working her fingers.

"See, Trent! See the doggie!" two year old Jennifer said, sitting suddenly upright and rocking back and forth on her knees, her eyes following every move of the "shadow dog" made by Grandma's hands and fingers opening and closing and moving first this way then that way.

"Ill make a rabbit," Trenton said, wiggling his fingers and holding his chubby hands up for the light to catch the movements and portray the pictures on the beige painted wall.

Grandma closed one of her hands, making it into a fist; several fingers from the other hand came up over the fist and a shadow donkey's long ears appeared.

"A donkey! A donkey!" the children squealed with delight, recognizing the semblance and similarity.

"Who rode on a donkey?" Grandma asked. "He was born in a stable and "Jesus!" Trenton replied quickly. "He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. The people put palm branches down for Him to ride on."

"Good. Very good!" Grandma commented. "What happened not too long after Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that little donkey?"

"He was crucified. O Grandma," the boy said sadly, "I do wish I could have been there: I wouldn't have allowed those wicked men to kill Jesus."

Jennifer looked like she was going to cry when Trenton finished his sentence.

"But Jesus died for our sins," Grandma said.

"I know. It was so that we could be saved. But look, Grandma! Look! You made a shadow of the devil."

"Why, Trent, whatever made you think that's how the devil looks?" Grandma asked.

"Don't move your hands, Grandma, nor your fingers. See the horns?" and Trenton pointed toward the wall. "There's his long tail," he added, pointing to another shadow. "And that over there is his big old pitchfork."

"Wait a minute, my dear," Grandma said, getting out of bed and turning a light on. "Who told you the devil has horns and a tail and a pitchfork, Trenton?"

"Kenny Soddors saw him, Grandma. He did! His mother has a book with a picture of the devil in it, and that's exactly how he looks. He showed it to me one day and I was scared. I even dreamed about the devil that night..., that he was coming after me with his big old pitchfork," and Trenton shivered with fright.

Reaching for the dear Bible that lay nearby, Grandma asked, "Didn't you tell Grandpa and me that Jesus had saved your soul, Trenton dear?" "Yes."

"Jesus washed all your sins away and then He sanctified you wholly by that same precious Blood. Right?"

"Oh yes, yes, Grandma! I know He did!"

"Then you have nothing to fear, dear little grandson. It's the wicked who shall be turned into hell."

The boy heaved a great sigh of relief. "And this about the devil having a tail and horns, and a pitchfork . . . we'll, that's all wrong, children. The Bible says that Satan comes as an angel of light. See" and Grandma pointed to the Scripture from which she was reading. "That's one reason so many people do the devil's bidding..., he comes in such smooth, nice and subtle ways. If he came wearing horns, and with a tail and carrying a pitchfork, people would run away from him in terror. He does go about as a 'roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,' as the Scripture tells us, but he's really quite different from the picture Kenny Soddors and you have of him, in your little minds. He hates God ... because God had to put him out of Heaven."

"Why did God have to do that, Grandma?"

"Because the devil became very, very proud and wanted to take God's place. And the sad thing is that the devil influenced other angels, too; and these were all cast out of Heaven with him."

"Where are these other angels now? I mean, they must be like the devil is if God had to throw them out of Heaven."

"In the 6th. verse of the little Book of Jude, the Bible says, 'And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he (God) hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.' God has had to chain them, children; they are so fierce! Until the 'judgment of the great day', they will remain chained in everlasting chains under darkness. But so long as you are covered by the precious Blood of Jesus you need not fear the devil..., nor his angels."

Trenton yawned sleepily. Then he said, "O Grandma, I'm so glad you told Jennifer and me that the devil doesn't have a tail nor a pitchfork or horns. I must tell Kenny now."

"And be sure you tell him about Jesus' Blood, Trenton. Kenny hasn't had his sins forgiven as yet."

"I'll tell him, Grandma. I will!" the boy promised, digging his toes down between the clean-smelling sheets and falling asleep.

* * * * *

October, 1978

Story 8

KINDNESS AND LOVE

"Dropping... dropping..., dropping ... dropping.. hear the quarters fall.

"You don't have A QUARTER!" Sherry said nastily to Cathi, as she quickly broke into the chorus of happy, singing voices. "You only dropped a nickel into the box," she taunted. "We're supposed to give quarters and fifty-cent pieces and... and dollars."

Cathi's cheeks flushed a scarlet red. In embarrassment, and with tears gushing from her pretty eyes, she rushed quickly past Sherry and out of the room.

Mrs. Hannold continued leading the class in song until the last child had dropped her coins into the box then she turned to Sherry.

"Where did Cathi go?" the teacher asked. "Is she ill?"

"She didn't put a quarter in the missionary box, Mrs. Hannold, and I told her about it. She dropped only five cents in and..."

"Sherry, you didn't!" Mrs. Hannold exclaimed in surprise, interrupting the child. "O no! No! Cathi's father is dead; her mother works very hard to support the family. Her nickel is very valuable and important."

Sherry positioned her dainty hands on her hips and declared vehemently, "But nickels don't go far. Why, it takes a long, long time to make a dollar and..."

"It takes just twenty nickels to make one dollar, Sherry. And Cathi's nickel giving has far exceeded the one dollar mark."

"But they can't have done that, Mrs. Hannold!" the mathematical whiz declared. "We've been having the missionary box for five Sundays exactly, and 5×5 makes 25. Cathi missed two Sundays, so that makes $3 \text{ Sundays} \times 5 \text{ cents}$ and that equals 15 cents."

"You must have watched Cathi every Sunday," the teacher said.

"O I did. I did! And each time she dropped in just one nickel. I saw it with my own two eyes."

Mrs. Hannold sighed. "Perhaps I should not have suggested that we drop in quarters, if possible. Some girls just can't afford to bring that much . . . Cathi's one of them... But I'll tell you all something: Cathi has dropped more money into the box than anyone here."

"But she didn't" Sherry persisted. "I saw what she put in, and I know!"

"But you missed one thing," the teacher said softly as tears glistened in her eyes. "You haven't seen all the 'candy' money that dear little girl has given me when I visit her every Thursday."

A gasp went up from the class. "Some of the kind-hearted church people have been giving Cathi money for candy and ice cream; instead of spending it on herself, every cent of it has been going into the missionary box. Cathi's a very generous-hearted and unselfish child."

Sherry's cheeks burned hot in embarrassment. She wouldn't have thought of giving up her candy and ice cream money for missions. No indeed! She liked the strawberry-banana-nut sundaes she got at the Purple Cow too well to sacrifice her money for anything Mrs. Hannold might want to do for God's cause.

"Have you forgotten about the widow's mite? Cathi's giving is like that biblical account."

Mrs. Hannold's statement brought Sherry rudely but surely out of her own private thinking.

"When we give, God looks at the motives and at the attitude of our heart," the teacher said, with tears in her eyes. "Just why do you give?" she asked. "I want each of you to ask yourself this question. If you're giving to be seen by your Sunday School classmates -- for show and pomp -- then God will not bless your giving, Our giving should always be done with a cheerful heart and for the glory of God."

Sherry's head dropped. She had been dropping her fifty-cent pieces into the box to be seen! Yes, she had.

Mrs. Hannold was speaking again. "Jesus said of the widow's mite., the smallest amount anyone could possibly give., that she had given more than all the rich who had dropped in of their great abundance of wealth. Like Cathi, she gave all that she had."

Tears formed in Sherry's eyes. Soon they sparkled on her eyelashes. Then they chased each other down her pretty cheeks. "Well, I didn't know about Cathi giving you any money!" she lamented.

"You see how wrongly you judged Cathi," Mrs. Hannold said kindly. "Just how do you suppose Jesus feels about this, Sherry dear? I think you owe Cathi an apology."

Sherry gulped. Whatever would the other girls think about her? she wondered, feeling humiliated.

"It's terribly wrong, and evil, to make fun of anybody . . . or to willfully and deliberately embarrass people," the kind teacher told her class "The Lord, Who sees everything we do and hears everything we say, will someday require an answer from us and He will punish us for these evil deeds. I think Sherry should go and try to find Cathi and bring her back to class."

As Sherry started for the door, Cathi walked into the room. "I'm sorry I left my class, Mrs. Hannold," she said softly. "I was so embarrassed! But I remembered reading about Jesus in Isaiah and how, when He was reviled, He opened not His mouth. That helped me. I want to be more and more like Jesus. Forgive me for crying and for leaving." Turning to Sherry she said, "I love you Sherry. You wouldn't understand about me because you don't know what it's like to be poor and fatherless. But I shouldn't have left class because of what you said."

"I . . . I'm sorry, Cathi." Sherry's words fairly tumbled out. "It was mean of me to say what I did., and unkind, too. Please, will you forgive me?" Turning to Mrs. Hannold she said, "Could we have a prayer meeting . . . now? I... I want to get saved..."

Mrs. Hannold nodded her head kindly.

"I... I want to get . . . what . . . whatever it is Cathi has," Sherry said, weeping.

"Let's pray," the teacher said, kneeling beside a contrite Sherry and leading the way in prayer.

Kindness had won a stubborn hearted girl when nothing else worked . . . Cathi's kindness, and her love!

* * * * *

November, 1978

Story 9

THE THANKSGIVING DOLLARS

Snow flakes were falling from the heavy gray clouds above Timmy's head as he started down the school steps for home.

"It's snowing! It's snowing!" The children's voices chorused together in excitement and jubilant song.

"It's snowing! It's snowing! It's snow--" Timmy's voice stopped singing so suddenly that it seemed the last note hung suspended somewhere above his head, in the mass of thick gray clouds.

"A dollar! A whole dollar! Hey, Carl, look! I found a dollar!" he exclaimed to his friend as he reached down and scooped up the crisp dollar bill. "A quarter, too!" he shouted gleefully.

"You're plain lucky!" Carl exclaimed. "Maybe there's more," he added as he began searching on the sidewalk down which he and Timmy were walking.

"Another quarter!" Timmy squealed with delight.

"And here's a dime!" Carl exclaimed with beaming face, focusing his eyes on the pavement and forgetting completely that it had begun to snow.

"I wonder if someone's pant's pocket ripped open," Timmy said philosophically. "I know mine did that once and I lost the marbles I had in the pocket and a dime my dad had given me. I felt awful over losing it. I wonder to whom this could belong." He scratched his head thoughtfully. "You know, Carl, I believe I'll keep the money for awhile, that way, if whoever lost it asks for it we could return it. What if it was Mrs. Baker! You know how very poor she is. Why, she can't afford to lose even a single penny of her small income."

"You're a silly, foolish boy, Timmy. If anyone hears about us finding money and here's a fifty-cent piece, right at my feet!" Carl squealed with delight; searching the sidewalk for more.

"Well, like I was saying, if the boys learn about us finding money each one of them will say they lost the money"

Carl's sentence trailed meaningfully and Timmy scratched his head thoughtfully.

"Not everybody's dishonest, Carl," the sandy-haired Timmy declared emphatically. "But I mean to hold on to the money I found. For awhile at least, and give whoever lost it a chance to make his or her loss known and to recover the loss. At least, as much as I've found; and here's four more dollars, folded together!"

By now the boys were full of excitement.

"I wonder who could have lost it!" Carl exclaimed, chasing another bill which the wind sent swirling past his legs and only returning to join Timmy after he had the crisp dollar held tightly in his hand. "This one's so crisp that it rattles," he said, panting from the chase.

"It's exciting, isn't it, Carl? And if nobody claims mine I know what I'll do.

"You'll put it on that new blue bicycle Mr. Sawyer has in the window of his hardware store," Carl said, laughing. "If my dad hadn't bought mine for my birthday that's what I'd do. That's a real beauty Mr. Sawyer has! You sure do need a new one, Timmy. Your old one's barely staying together anymore."

A happy gleam shone in Timmy's eyes. "I really could use a new bike, Carl, but that wasn't what I was thinking of at all. I had something better than that in mind."

"Like what?" Carl spun around so fast to look at Timmy that he lost his balance and fell to the snowy sidewalk.

Brushing the snow from his trousers and laughing merrily, he asked quickly, "What would be nicer than that shiny new bike? And this money would about finish your savings for it. Right?"

"Right! But I know something I want far more than Mr. Sawyer's shiny blue bicycle, Carl." Carl's mouth flew open wide.

"You remember Reverend Hollister asking how many of us boys would be willing to sacrifice something we wanted very badly for our church Thanksgiving offering?" Timmy asked.

"You mean for the heathen, Timmy?"

"For foreign missions, yes; and of course that includes the heathen. I wanted a certain amount -- in fact, I prayed about it. I asked the Lord to please help me to get it so I could give in this year's special Missionary offering"

"Not I!" Carl blurted out quickly.

"This is my money."

Timmy eyed his friend curiously, then he said, "I guess none of us can say truthfully that what we have is really ours, Carl: You see, everything we have actually belongs to God. He gives us these nice things to enjoy and ..."

"Think the way you want to, stupid, I know better! I found this money, didn't I? I'm sure God never sent it down from heaven, and I'm going to enjoy what is mine by spending it. Right now, too!" and with those words Carl turned and ran swiftly down the sidewalk toward the stores in the center of town.

Timmy hurried home, clutching the money tightly in his fisted hand.

Days passed by. When no one claimed the money, his father said, "I suppose you're ready to go with me to Mr. Sawyer's Hardware, Timmy. I noticed the bicycle's still in the display window. It's a beauty, Son. How about it? I've got to run down after a few tools."

Timmy's eyes shone like diamonds. He was smiling broadly. "Oh I'm not getting the bike, Dad," he said brightly.

"You're not? But I thought you wanted it!"

"I did, and I do. But I don't need it nearly so much as we need to raise the money so those new missionaries can get across the ocean and begin to tell the heathen that Jesus died for them.

My money is going into the Thanksgiving Foreign Missions offering, Dad. Maybe someday the Lord will want me to go for Him and then I'll be especially glad and happy that I could give."

Daddy blew his nose and brushed tears from his eyes. "That's a great thing you're doing, dear boy. A noble gesture. God will repay you."

"I get a good feeling whenever I give to God, or do anything for Him, Dad."

"That's because 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' Timmy. You've learned the secret of real joy. Yes, real joy and unselfish giving."

"And it's a good feeling," Timmy said, whistling and hurrying upstairs to count the money and see exactly how much he could help swell the missionary offering.

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December, 1978

Story 10

JAKAYLA AND JONQUIL'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

Jakayla Renee and Jonquil Jonelle pressed their tiny noses tight against the kitchen window and watched the snow as it fell from the sky like great white fluffs of purest cotton

Holding her beloved baby doll and turning her face toward the window and the lazily-falling snowflakes, Jakayla said lovingly, "See the pretty snow, Melissa! Jonquil Jonelle and I love the snow; you must learn to like it too."

Jonquil Jonelle reached over and patted Melissa's silken hair affectionately then, with deep blue eyes alight and aglow with love for both Jakayla and the doll, the little girl said, "I gave Teddy away."

Jakayla turned away from the window and looked at her sister. "You... you gave Teddy away!" she exclaimed. "Why? Who . . . who has Teddy . . . now?" and Jakayla's eyes searched her young sister's face for the answer to her questions.

Of all little girls who loved their toys, and treated them with utmost respect and courtesy . . . like human beings should always be treated! . . . Jakayla Renee and Jonquil Jonelle excelled at their task as 'play mothers.' Melissa's face was always kept spotlessly clean by little mother Jakayla and her long, silken braids were kept neat and orderly by the same loving hands; and always, at each and every family altar, Melissa and Teddy were made to sit quietly and reverently beside their little mothers until the sacred time was finished.

The toys . . . Melissa and Teddy, the cuddly-soft chocolate-brown bear . . . were special birthday gifts to Jakayla and Jonquil from Uncle Ben. They were the first bought toys the girls had ever had and oh, how they were loved and prized.

"You... gave Teddy away?" Jakayla asked again in surprise.

With a tear in each eye, but with a brave smile on her dear face, Jonquil nodded. "Hildreth needs him," she explained simply, with a quiver in her voice.

Jakayla understood. Hugging Melissa close to her bosom and kissing her smiling face, the little girl hurried to her mother. Pushing Melissa gently into her mother's hands, she said, "Pack Melissa with Teddy, Mother . . . for Hildreth's sister Sonya. She wanted a doll..."

Mother looked long at her dear children, then she drew them lovingly close into the circle of her arms. "God will reward you greatly for this sacrifice," she said with a catch in her voice as she kissed the girls.

"God gave us Jesus," Jakayla said, "and Jesus was God's only Son... so I .. I can give my Melissa to... to make someone else happy.., like Jesus makes us happy."

Melissa and Teddy were packed into boxes by loving hands and shipped, with many necessary items, to a mission station in Africa.

Hildreth and Sonya, standing inside the mission house, watched eagerly as their mother unpacked the boxes that arrived from America.

"And here's a box that says, 'For Hildreth Swartz; With love from Jonquil Jonelle,' " the missionary mother read. "And one for you, Sonya.. 'With love from Jakayla Renee.' "

The beautifully wrapped boxes were placed in the girls' hands and when Hildreth saw the cuddly-soft chocolate brown bear that lay inside her box she squealed with delight: "O Mother, he's exactly like what I asked the Lord for! God sent him!" she exclaimed, hugging the bear close to her heart.

"And God sent me my very own dolly!" Sonya cried joyfully. "I knew He'd answer my prayer! I did! I did!"

Overjoyed at the girls' answers to their prayers, Mrs. Swartz held the toys high and looked at them. "Gifts from God!" she exclaimed as tears ran down her pretty but tired looking face. "But wait! There's a tag on the bear's leg and one on the doll's arm..."

"Read them, Mother. Read what they say!" the children begged, jumping up and down.

" 'My name's Melissa,' " Mrs. Swartz read, "I like being cuddled. I received much love where I came from; Please give me lots more.' "

"O I will, Melissa! I will! I love you ever so much!" Sonya exclaimed, taking the pretty doll up in her arms and hugging her tight to her breast.

"And Hildreth's pretty little tag says, 'My name's Teddy. I like being cuddled and hugged. Like Melissa, I received much tender care and I loved every single bit of it. I want you to love me as much as the little girl did who sent me to you.' "

Hildreth drew the bear close to her heart. "Know something, Teddy?" she said, holding the toy before her and talking to him. "God sent you and Melissa to Hildreth and me in answer to our prayers. If He answered one prayer for us He can answer another., and another and another. He can answer all our prayers! Sonya and I need the Lord to heal us. We've been having terrible fevers since Mommie and Daddy brought us here as missionaries, and I'm going to ask Him to heal us . . . right now! You're going with me to the prayer meeting, Teddy: You're my first answer to prayer...."

"I'm coming, too Hildreth," Sonya announced. "Melissa and I. I know God can heal us. I know it! Melissa's proof that God answers prayer..."

"... And so, my dear children," Mrs. Swartz's letter read to Jakayla Renee and Jonquil Jonelle, "you see what your unselfishness did for my Hildreth and Sonya. Their faith was strengthened and stimulated until, when they asked the Lord to heal them . . . forever!., of the dreadful fevers they've had ever since our coming here, God did the work! HE HEALED HILDRETH AND SONYA! Completely! They believed God and He did the work. Thanks, my dears, for sending the beautiful doll and the cuddly bear., in answer to the girls' prayers. And one more thing; you will be happy to know that Melissa and Teddy attend all the family altar services here and that they are getting plenty of tender love and care.

"I... I'm so happy we sent Melissa and Teddy!" Jakayla said softly when her mother had finished reading the missionary's letter to her and Jonquil Jonelle. "I fee! happy and . . . and all good on the inside."

"I do too!" Jonquil Jonelle said.

"That's because you gave in unselfish love," Mother affirmed kindly.

The girls looked at each other and smiled. It was much better to give than to receive!

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THE END