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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1979

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1
ICE ON THE POND

With his shiny new skates dangling over his shoulder, Jonathan hurried down the hill toward the pond. If there was one thing he liked better than anything else in all the world, it was to skate on the glassy-smooth mill pond in the dead of winter. Nothing -- absolutely nothing -- could fill him with such chill bumps of excitement and thrills of joy as when he went skimming easily and smoothly at full speed across the mirror of ice. It was then that his legs felt like they could fly, almost.

Jonathan pulled his cap down farther over his ears and buttoned the top button on his coat. The air was biting cold, coming directly out of the northeast. It thrust its icy fist down his throat and hammered him on the back, but he liked it; it was perfect weather for skating; the kind that made a fellow want to move, faster and faster.

Sitting down on a stump at the edge of the pond, Jonathan shed his shoes for the skates. Lacing them up tight, he went skimming across the ice with perfect balance and great ease, every part of him feeling vibrant and alive. He skated forward and backward and made figure-eights as easily as if he were walking and with each time around the pond he became even more convinced that ice skating was what he liked best to do in his spare time.

The wind howled through the trees, whipping the naked willow branches along the bank and sending the ends of Jonathan's wool scarf trailing behind him in mid-air. His mother had insisted he wear it around his neck and mouth and now he realized just how wise her suggestion had been.

"Hey, Jon!" a voice shouted from the far edge of the pond.

Jonathan looked up and saw Earl Maddox lacing his skates on his feet. "Hi, Earl," he called, skating quickly toward his friend.

"Say, it's really cold today! Earl exclaimed, as his shiny new skates cut across the ice.

"It's cold all right, Earl, but you won't notice it too badly once you get moving. I sure do like your skates; they're beautiful."

"A birthday present from Dad and Mom," Earl replied. "I sure do like them, too. I'll race you to the other side of the pond, Jon..."

"Great! Let's go; one., two . . . three, and we're off!" Jonathan shouted gleefully.

First Earl was in the lead; then Jonathan, then Earl . . . Finally the shoreline drew nearer and nearer and Jonathan was the first to reach it.

"That was fun," Earl said, skating circles around his friend on one skate. "Let's do it again." "O.K. by me," Jonathan laughed. "Hey, wait for me!" Lyle Enckley called, racing toward Earl and Jonathan. "I'll race you across the pond!" he challenged.

"That's just what we were going to do," Earl said. "In fact, this will be the second time around for Jonathan and me. And wouldn't you know it[He beat me back to this point by a bare fraction of a foot!" And Earl laughed pleasantly.

Lyle surveyed the skates on his friends' feet then he said quickly, "I'll bet each of you a candy bar that I'll beat both of you around the pond."

Jonathan's mouth flew open wide in astonished shock. "Nothing doing!" he exclaimed with a positive note in his voice.

"Afraid I'll win the bet?"

"Not in the least," Jonathan answered.

"O, so you think you're the best skater around here! Let me show you and Earl a thing or two..."

"I'm sure you're a fast skater, Lyle; but that's not the reason I won't accept your bet..., nor challenge it. It's simply that a Christian never bets. Not even on a candy bar."

"I can't see anything wrong with that," Lyle answered quickly.

"My dad says betting is a form of gambling. And gambling is sinful and evil and . . ."

"But a candy bar/" Lyle insisted. "One measly little old candy bar!"

"And Mr. Wickers always says it's 'the little foxes that spoil the vines,' " Earl said, quoting their Sunday School teacher.

"You mean you fellows believe everything he says?" Lyle asked sincerely.

"Sure do!" the boys answered simultaneously.

Lyle scratched his nose thoughtfully. "I guess you're both right. And I guess Mr. Wickers is right, too. I've always wanted to believe he's right. But every time I tell my dad what Mr. Wickers said, he laughs at me and says I'll be one big sissy if I do everything my Sunday School teacher tells me to do."

"Well, David was no sissy, that's for sure! Not when he killed a lion and a bear and then killed Goliath!" Jonathan said positively. "He trusted in the Lord with all his heart and he loved the Lord dearly, too. So did Daniel. And there wasn't a sissy bone in his entire body. Anybody who could sleep in a den full of lions certainly was not a sissy!"

"Say, you're right!" Lyle said brightly. "I never thought about that. Wait till I tell my dad! Know something? I'm going to Mr. Wickers' house right now and ask him to pray for me. I've wanted to get saved for a long, long time but Dad scared me out of doing it. But I'm not scared any more. The God who took care of Daniel in the lion's den, and helped David kill those vicious beasts and that wicked old giant, will help me and take care of me. Thanks for all you told me; it's helped me so much..."

The boys watched till Lyle disappeared over the hill, then Jonathan said, "Let's make an altar out of the tree stump and pray for Lyle."

"I thought of the same thing," Earl said, leading the way to the stump.

* * * * *

February, 1979

Story 2

A SOFT ANSWER

"You broke Sally Ann's head. You did! You did!" Penny cried, shouting at the top of her voice. "I hate you, Amy Jo!"

"I didn't mean to do it," Amy said softly, as tears stood in her pale blue eyes. "I really didn't mean to do it, Penny. Sally Ann's head just slipped off while I was trying to dress her. I'm very, very sorry."

"You meant to do it, Amy; you did!" Penny screamed. "I hate you! Don't ever play with my toys again. Never! Do you hear?" and Penny gathered Sally Ann up in her arms ... body and head ... and ran to the house, shouting loudly, "Mother, Mother, Amy Jo broke Sally Antes head off."

"My oh my, oh my!" Bryan exclaimed, hurrying to the porch to see what had happened.

"Quiet down!" he told his sister, grabbing her by the shoulders and shaking her soundly. "Your lungs will burst one of these days, Penny, unless you learn not to scream so loudly."

"Let me go!" Penny exclaimed. "I want Mother."

"She's out in the garden, little lady; and if I know Mother the way I think I do I know a certain little girl who's asking for a hard spanking. Now calm down!"

"I will not, Bryan Jeffries; not when Amy broke my doll's head. See!" and Penny held Sally Ann's two parts up for Bryan to see.

"Oh ho! I see; I see!" Bryan said, throwing his head back and laughing hard. "Sally Ann's head's been dissected."

"Di ... sec ...?"

"That means, to separate into parts in order to examine minutely. Perhaps you and Amy Jo were playing doctor?" Bryan teased, questioning his sister as he held Sally Ann's head before him and looked carefully into the hollow cavity of the smiling-faced doll's neck. "Hm-m!" he exclaimed. "Nothing interesting inside her head. It looks hollow. Perfectly hollow. Not a single brain inside her pretty head!" he added.

"Give her to me!" Penny demanded. "Just 'cause you want to be a doctor doesn't mean you can make fun of my Sally Ann. If Amy hadn't been so careless this wouldn't have happened."

"You can't have Sally Ann's pretty, but hollow, head until you stop screaming, Penny. Mother told me to take care of you and Amy Jo until she got in from the garden. So if you want Sally Ann's head, you will stop that screaming and in a calm voice say, 'Please, may I have Sally Ann's head?'"

Amy came through the doorway then. "I'm sorry, Bryan," she said. "I really didn't mean to do it. Sally Ann's head came off while I was trying to change her dress."

"But you're glad it happened!" Penny accused loudly. "Just 'cause she's my doll, and not yours, you wanted to do it."

Amy Jo's blue eyes brimmed over with tears again. "O Penny, I didn't. I didn't! I'm so sorry!" she cried out in a softly-tender voice. "You may have my Heidi, and..., and my beloved Jennifer, too. I love you, Penny," and Amy hurried to her sister and threw her arms around her neck.

Penny shrugged loose from her sister's loving embrace. "I don't want your Heidi, nor your Jennifer she exclaimed bitterly. "I want Sal Ann!"

"Quiet, Penny!" a voice commanded from the doorway.

Penny spun around quickly "Mother!" Mother!" she wailed, "Amy broke Sally Ann! Just look her. She can't even think any more she has no head!"

"I didn't mean to do it, Mother. O, I didn't."

"But you did!" Penny screamed accusingly. "You did!"

Mother set the pail of vegetable down. Then she washed her hand And then ... Yes, you guessed it! She reached for the ever-present slender willow switch. "Come with me, Penny," she said kindly but firmly. "Daddy and I have told each of you that we will not tolerate screaming. You have violated one of the rules of our home and you must be punished for it. Your heart is a hot bed of murder, Penny dear."

Mother wept as she used the 'persuader.' "O Penny," she said brokenly, "you need Jesus so very, very badly. When are you going to ask Him to come into your heart?"

"I ... I'm not ... a ... a murderer Penny replied in a greatly subdued tone of voice. "I'm not, Mother; am I?"

"If you hate Amy ... and I hear you say you do ... you are murderer, honey. The Bible say 'Whosoever hateth his brother is murderer: and ye know that n murderer hath eternal life abiding him.' I John 3:15. Penny, can't you see what's buried deep inside your young heart?"

"I ... I guess I never ... O Mother, don't want to be hateful an longer," Penny cried brokenly. "I want Jesus to make my heart good and kind and loving, like Amy' Please pray for me."

The day looked all new an gloriously bright as Penny prayer through and was converted.

"I love you, Amy," she cried happily, throwing her arms around her sister's neck. "And now there'll be two of us giving soft answers. I'm going to get sanctified wholly, too, then the 'want-to-scream' will all be taken out of my heart."

"O Penny! Penny! I'm so happy!" Amy Jo exclaimed joyfully. "I love you. And Penny, your face is shining!" she added softly.

"And as an added blessing, here's Sally Ann, all in one piece again!" Bryan said, handing the 'whole' doll to her happy little mother.

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March, 1979

Story 3

MARILYN'S HONEY BEES

"Now you be real good," Marilyn told Peggy and Janie, the rag dolls, as she put them on her bed and covered them with the pretty bright orange and yellow afghan Grandma had made, and which lay folded on a nearby old fashioned chest. "I'm going calling with Grandfather today," she explained. "You do remember that he's a preacher!" she added, important-like. "I'll come upstairs just as soon as we get back home," she promised, kissing the cuddly-soft dolls on their button noses and stroking their long, dark, thick orlon braids before running gleefully down the stairs.

"Is my little girl ready?" Grandfather asked as Marilyn skipped into the kitchen.

"I am, Grandfather. O, I'm so excited; Mother said you'd take me with you when you went calling, and she was right. I love you, Grandfather and Grandmother."

"And we love you, Marilyn. But come, let's go. The day will be gone before we're aware of it almost."

Sitting on the front seat beside Grandfather was so much fun. Marilyn felt big and grown-up.

"Did you ever see bees at work?" Grandpa asked, pulling into the farmyard of one of his church members.

"Many times," Marilyn replied. "Mr. Pendergast has his orchard full of hives. We buy all our honey from him, Grandpa. It's delicious."

Grandpa chuckled. "Today you and I are going to be special honey bees," he told his grand-daughter.

Marilyn giggled. "O Grandpa, you're funny. You and I can't be bees. First, we're not a bee; Jesus made us different than bees. We don't have wings and we don't buzz and ..."

"No, we're not bees, as such, little one. But wait until we're through this day," Grandpa replied, getting out of the car and walking with Marilyn to the pretty white gate that led into the beautiful big yard surrounding the Eberly's white brick farmhouse.

"Hello, hello!" Mrs. Eberly said warmly as she looked up from where she was weeding in one of the flower beds. "Come inside, Pastor; I'll put a pot of coffee to perking. And welcome, Marilyn dear."

"Is your husband here?" Grandpa asked quickly, practicing II Thess. 5:22 ... 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.'

"He's out at the barn."

"Thank you; I'll visit with him out there. Marilyn, you may play with Krista and Misty until I'm ready to go."

"Goody, goody!" the Eberly girls exclaimed, clapping their hands together gleefully.

"Let's play beneath the trellis along the house," Misty suggested. "Mother's wisteria vine is full of pretty flowers and Krista and I have our table and chair set out there."

"I don't want to play there," Krista said quickly. "I want to play down along the stream."

"O.K., Krista," Marilyn said brightly. "Let's play by the stream. I like the brook. It sounds like it's laughing."

"We're going to play beneath the trellis," Misty replied. "Mother doesn't want us to go down to the creek and get all wet." And she led the way to the wisteria vine.

"I'm sorry, Misty, I didn't know," Marilyn apologized. "Of course, we shall obey your mother."

"I'm not playing then?" Krista declared angrily, grabbing the doll out of Marilyn's arms.

"Give that doll back to Marilyn!" Misty demanded. "I gave it to her to play with," she added, twisting Krista's arm.

"Don't! Please don't do that, Misty. Let Krista keep the doll; I'll play with something else. After all, being here with both of you is the best thing of all."

Inside the car, on their way to the next home, Grandpa said, "Well, well, well! What a fine report I received about my lovely granddaughter?"

"Report?" Marilyn said, looking at her grandfather.

"You have put several important honey bees to work, Marilyn. I'm proud of you."

"Honey bees? I don't understand," the little girl said seriously.

"The 'be ye kind' bee settled a' quarrel, so Mrs. Eberly told me."

Marilyn smiled. "I love both Krista and Misty," she said softly. "I do wish, though, that Krista wouldn't be so jealous and so selfish. She really needs to be sanctified, Grandpa."

"And right there is where another bee was working for you, Marilyn ... the 'be ye holy' bee. Mrs. Eberly said she saw a display of genuinely-real Holiness in your heart, when Krista was so hateful and unkind to you."

"I feel sorry for Krista, Grandpa; I know how she feels. I used to be just like that before Jesus filled me with His Holy Spirit. I'm sure Krista feels awful. I know how ashamed I used to be after I acted ugly or hateful and mean."

"Thank God, that's all gone from your heart, little one!" Grandpa exclaimed. "And now you know why I said you and I would be special bees at work today. God, working in and through a holy heart and life, makes it possible and easy to be kind, be holy, be temperate, be steadfast and..."

"O Grandpa, I see it! I see it!" Marilyn cried happily. "Our 'honey bees' work for God. It's beautiful!" she said joyously, settling back against the cushioned seat while grandpa drove on to the next house.

* * * * *

April, 1979

Story 4

THE BOSS

Ellen stomped up the stair steps, grumbling and mumbling as she went. Her face wore a dark frown and her beautiful eyes were deep pools of anger. "I'll not do it!" she stormed aloud. "Kelly's not my boss and I'll not do it!"

"You'll not do what, Ellen?" Mother asked, starting down the stair steps as her irate little daughter placed her dainty little bare feet on the top landing.

"Kelly said I should feed Spot and Tip and I'm not doing it. He's not my boss, even if he is bigger and older than I am. So there!"

"And why can't you feed Spot and Tip, Ellen? Kelly's terribly busy today..."

"I'm not going to do it; Kelly's too bossy."

"You will feed the dogs!" Mother ordered in no uncertain tone of voice.

"But Mother, Kelly's always telling me what to do."

"Well, it's time my little girl began to assume some of these smaller tasks. Now run along and feed Spot and Tip, and don't forget to put water in their bucket." "But Mother...!"

"Do as you're told, Ellen dear; no 'butting'! "

Grumbling in a low, discordant monotone, Ellen stumbled slowly down the stairs, her face as gloomy looking as a thunder cloud.

Spot and Tip, sensing Ellen's temper and mood, ran quickly into the dog house and hid in the farthest corner until the grumpy little girl had finished her work and was a safe distance away from them. Then, very, very cautiously and carefully, Tip stuck his soft brown nose outside the opening of the dog house and looked around before venturing to the dish of food, his dog brain

telling him that there was a great difference between Kelly and the bossy little Ellen. Yes, there was a difference, Tip decided in his dog way, taking his tail from between his legs and wagging it vigorously in gratitude for his food and water, with Spot now joining him.

Still grumbling and complaining, Ellen walked dismally across the lawn, nursing a feeling of self-pity and hurt pride. For nearly all of her life, she had been boss ... where Kelly was concerned. Why this sudden change? she wondered, fretting over the fact that she had had to fulfill Kelly's orders and feed the dogs instead of going her merry, care-free way and playing with her toys, like always. Kelly had added that it was time she should ask the Lord to forgive her for her selfishness and her bossiness and learn to help their mother more, too.

"The big boss!" Ellen said out loud, hurrying across the lawn to the meadow and the spreading willow tree where the sheep grazed contentedly.

"Out of my way!" she demanded angrily of a perfectly harmless and peaceful little lamb as he frisked playfully in front of her.

"Move!" she ordered hatefully ... loudly ... as the cuddly-soft little creature ignored her command and continued his frolicking and dancing in the meadow.

"MOVE!" she yelled in her bossy, authoritative manner, and she raised her leg to kick the playful, innocent lamb.

The kick, however, was thwarted and averted by a sudden, strong and mighty force from behind Ellen. Without knowing just what had happened, the little boss was swept off her feet and thrown to the ground.

Stunned and shocked and humiliated, she stumbled to her feet, only to be hit again and thrown mercilessly to the ground, this time with more force than the first time. Oh how her body hurt and ached! If only she could get her hands on her tormentor! she thought. If only...!

Turning her head, Ellen saw Ezra. Her face went white when she saw the ram standing some distance away with 'fire' in his eyes. Suddenly, she was scared, Really scared. She had never liked Ezra; the ram knew it. On more than one occasion she had thrown stones at him and shouted how much she hated him. But always, she was on the outside of the fence that separated the lawn from the grassy meadow. Today, however....!

Ezra was stomping his feet now (just like she did when she was angry and couldn't have her way! Ellen noticed) and Ezra was backing up! Ellen was paralyzed with fear, knowing the ram always did this before charging on his enemy or tormentor.

Covering her eyes with her hands, Ellen cried to the Lord, "Help me, Jesus! Please! Please! I've been a very naughty and wicked child ... so stubborn and ... and selfish and bossy. Save me, Jesus! Please! Don't let Ezra kill me: I'm not ready to die! O God, save my soul and forgive all my sins. I'm sorry I kept You out of my heart so long..."

Ellen prayed and cried and called upon God for mercy until her heavy load of guilt and condemnation went rolling away, and her sins were forgiven, washed in Jesus' precious Blood.

When she finally opened her eyes, she saw Ezra heading for the singing, murmuring brook. Breathing a great sigh of relief, and thanking God for not only saving her soul but for keeping Ezra from charging again, Ellen started for the fence and the back yard. Ezra was boss of the meadow, she knew without a doubt, just as she had tried to be boss of her brother and her little friends. But that was all changed now: Jesus was living inside her heart and He was the One who had full control of her life.

It was a wonderful feeling, this feeling of freedom, and Ellen raced up the hill to tell Mother and Kelly the good news.

* * * * *

May, 1979

Story 5

A GIFT FOR MOTHER

Jill slid the three batter-filled cake pans into the oven and closed the door. With a happy sigh, and humming softly as she worked, she prepared the ingredients for the frosting. Turning quickly, she looked at her sister. "What are you going to get for Mother. Tanya?" she asked.

A lump popped up somewhere inside Tanya's throat. "I .. I .. " she stammered.

"I told you not to give all your money into the missionary offering," Jill scolded. "You're too soft. Tanya. Long ago, one of my Sunday School teachers tried to pressure me. But she didn't get anywhere. I wouldn't budge."

The lump inside Tanya's throat seemed to grow bigger and harder and the tears which had only threatened to come when Jill made mention of something for Mother. now surfaced and trickled down Tanya's full, round cheeks.

"Now don't get all weepy about it!" Jill scolded again "You know how much I hate tears. If only you had listened to me..."

Tanya swallowed "But God told me to give the money," she said softly. "And I'd rather obey Him than..."

"You were just swayed by what you heard," Jill said, breaking into her sister's unfinished sentence.

Tanya's dark eyes rested momentarily upon her sister's face, then she hurried to her bedroom.

Her piggy bank was empty, she knew, but her heart felt happy. She had given her small collection of dimes and nickels and pennies to the offering because she loved Jesus with all her heart. Hers was a gift, made in love, to the One Who had given her a new heart then cleansed and sanctified her wholly.

Tanya sat down on the bed Jill's cake would be beautiful, she knew; and Mother would be so pleased, knowing that Jill had made it all by herself And the macrame, too.

Tanya looked toward the closet where the prettily-wrapped gift sat upon the shelf, ready to be handed to Mother on Mother's Day Jill had bought the necessary materials with her own money and made the beautiful macrame piece with her very own hands, too It had all been so exciting, watching as Jill's fingers made the precious gift, and then keeping her secret, too.

What could she give Mother? Tanya wondered now.

Dropping to her knees, she prayed. Then a wonderful idea came to her: She had Betsy! Yes, indeed. And Betsy was very valuable. Aunt Cora had told her so when she gave the doll to her

Getting quickly to her feet Tanya lifted the doll up in her arms. Drawing the porcelain china face close to her mouth she said, "Betsy, I'm giving you to Mother You'll still be in the family, only you'll sit on a soft chair in Father's and Mother's room instead of here in Jill's and my room. I gave my money to Jesus because I love Him with all my heart and now I'm giving you to Mother because I love Mother and you so dearly. Mother'll be kind to you, Betsy; and ever so good and gentle to you, too. And I'll see you each and every single day. Be a good girl now while I wrap you up prettily in the shoe box, and don't make one teeny, tiny bit of noise until Mother holds you in her arms. I love you, Betsy, very, very much!"

Tanya hurried to the hall closet and got the empty shoe box and some wrapping paper. Then, kissing Betsy's dear face, she laid her carefully on the tissue paper inside the box.

Jill nagged and scolded and fussed at Tanya for giving her money to 'heathens,' as she phrased it, and for not having anything to give to Mother. Tanya, her little secret hiding beneath the folded clothing in her dresser drawer, smiled sweetly and prayed for her sister whose heart was not yet converted.

Faint rays of sunlight were lighting the room when Tanya awoke on Mother's Day, She slipped out of bed quietly. With the shoe-box in her arms, she tip-toed down the stairs and set the table for breakfast, being careful to place her love-gift beside Mother's plate before hurrying back to the bedroom.

Jill was brushing her beautiful long dark hair when Tanya entered the room. "We'll get breakfast this morning," she announced in a whispered tone of voice. Tanya smiled and slipped her dress over her head then followed her sister down the stair steps. She had just finished buttering the last piece of toast when she heard her parents' footsteps on the stairs.

"Happy Mother's Day!" the girls chorused together.

"A special treat for you, Mother," Jill said, proudly displaying a fluffy-light omelet surrounded by small, lightly-browned sausages and golden-brown pancakes.

Immediately after breakfast, Jill placed her beautifully-wrapped gift in her mother's hands. "I made this especially for you!" she exclaimed, watching as the wrapping paper fell away and the piece of macrame was lifted out of the box.

"Oh Jill, it's beautiful!" Mother exclaimed. "Beautiful!" she repeated, as she hugged Jill close to her heart

"I have another surprise for you, Mother, but that will have to wait until after dinner," Jill said, watching as her mother began unwrapping a box she hadn't noticed before.

Jill's eyes were shining until she saw Betsy's porcelain face come out of the shoe box. "Tanya!" she scolded "How ... how could you. give Mother something so .. so ... well ... whose mother wants a doll? Especially one as old and ... and ... as antique as Betsy? O Tanya, I'm embarrassed! Perhaps this will teach you not to give all your money away."

Tears went dancing down Tanya's soft rosy-cheeks. "It... it's a ... a love-gift to you, Mother dear," she stammered sweetly, in spite of the fast-falling tears and the catch inside her throat. "A ... a love-gift, like I gave to Jesus when I gave my money to the missionary offering."

Drawing Tanya and Betsy close to her heart. Mother said kindly and brokenly. "I love your gift, Tanya. O how much I love it! It represents real sacrifice on your part. I know how very dearly you loved Betsy. I will love and cherish this gift forever and ever. Thank you, thank you, honey. Nothing you could have bought me would have made me so happy." And tears brimmed over in Mother's eyes. "But Betsy will need someone to love her, and since I'm too busy to do it I assign this duty to you, Tanya dear. Love her just as you have always done."

"O Mother, I will. I will!" Tanya cried happily, feeling all good and warm on the inside. God had given her sacrifice gift back to her ... to love and to hold. It was wonderful. wonderful!

* * * * *

June, 1979

Story 6
FOR DAD, ESPECIALLY

The air was gentle and softly-warm and the sky, a cloudless robin-egg-blue, gave Doug Carson the feeling that a day like this should never, never end but go on and on forever and ever.

He glanced through the open window to the roses that blossomed along each side of the driveway and the path that led to the front door of their house and for a very brief moment he

almost put his open Bible down and ran outside, where the sun and the clear blue sky were beckoning to him. But that would never do, he decided quickly as he turned away from the open window and continued with his memorization of Matthew 5. If he ever amounted to anything for God he knew he would have to discipline himself now, when he was still a boy; so, closing his eyes and concentrating hard, he quoted verse after verse of the chapter ... over and over, again and again ... until, with deep inner satisfaction, he knew the entire chapter by heart.

Closing the Bible and thanking the Lord for helping him with the memorization! Doug ran outside.

"It's about time you came out!" Carl Byerly exclaimed. "Thought you were going to take all day at doing that stupid thing you got into your head."

"Learning Scripture is never stupid, Carl. It's one of the best things in the world for me to do. Dad and Mother say that whatever I learn now will no doubt stick with me for the rest of my life."

"But look at all the fun you're missing. Seems you'd be glad to forget about studying, now that school's out for the summer."

Doug smiled and made no comment, realizing the utter futility of trying to make his friend understand.

"Let's play ball; the gang's waiting," Carl said, grabbing his bat and mitt and running to the back lot. "Your folks won't mind, will they?" he called across his shoulder to Doug.

"Course not; they're glad I play in my own yard and lot. Dad's home today. He's a great pitcher; let's ask him to play with us."

Carl swung around so suddenly that he almost fell on his face. "Are you kidding!" he exclaimed. "That would spoil everything. Who wants an old man hanging around?"

"My dad's not old, Carl," Doug said kindly, "and I'd rather have him play with me than anyone I know. He's a wonderful father."

Carl hee-hawed and called Doug a sissy, then hurried to the gang. "I guess we're all here," he announced in a loud voice. "Now that our Sunday School boy is finished with his lesson."

The other boys roared with laughter. Doug merely smiled and ignored the barbed remark ... inside, his soul was a deep and peaceful calm. Being sanctified wholly was wonderful, he thought silently as he thanked the Lord for doing the completed work in his heart.

The game was soon in full swing. Doug hit the ball and was on the homeward stretch for a home run. But Leon Prentiss got the ball and touched the base seconds before Doug slid in to home base.

"Yay!" Carl shouted, cheering for all he was worth. "A home run for our side!"

"It's not," Leon countered. "I got the ball before Doug was on home base."

"You did not!" Carl shouted. "That was a home run for our side." "It was not!" "It was!" "It wasn't!"

"Leon's right," Doug said, getting to his feet and brushing the dirt and dust off his clothes. "I didn't quite make it home before Leon got the ball. I'm out."

"You're not!" Carl contended angrily. "That was a home run. On with the game, fellows!"

"No, Carl, no! I'm out! Leon's right! ..."

"Wrong; we had a home run." "Sorry, fellows," Doug said kindly, starting across the lot. "I'll not cheat, nor lie, no matter what. As Dad says, I'm shaping my life now for the future man I'll be, and I intend to keep my heart and life pure and clean so that when I'm grown I'll be as noble a man as my father is."

"What a bore!" Carl exclaimed as Doug headed back for the house.

Father's Day was all golden and bright with sunshine. Doug's gift to his father was finally unwrapped and opened. "What a lovely tie!" Mr. Carson said, holding the conservative black and gray tie up to his shirt. Then, as tears shimmered and shone in his gray eyes, he drew Doug close to his heart and said, "I really like this tie, Son, but you gave me a gift of far greater worth yesterday, and then this morning in church, too ..."

Doug's mind did a quick flip-flop back to yesterday. So far as he could remember, he hadn't given his father a single thing. What did his dad mean? he wondered. This morning, in church, he had quoted all 48 verses of Matthew 5 ... publicly ... for his father, especially! But yesterday?

"I am proud of you, Doug," his father was saying again; "proud of you with a noble pride ... for not cheating nor lying. I saw the game yesterday; you weren't quite home when Leon got the ball..."

Doug's heart was beating wildly with joy.

"You have given me the best and greatest gift of all, dear boy, by being honest and upright. God bless you! Someday, God will use you."

Doug's arms encircled his father's neck. Someday he would be a godly man, just like his father, he purposed anew.

A warm feeling engulfed him.

* * * * *

July, 1979

Story 7

A DIME FOR DAD

Joel sat on the big front porch counting his money, his legs crossed Indian-fashion and a crooked, pleased half-smile tugging pleasantly at the corners of his mouth. For many, many months he had been saving for the special missionary offering which was to be taken up in his church. He was overjoyed with the amount he had accumulated. It represented hard work, every thin dime of it did. But he liked the great, new, wonderful feeling that lodged deep inside his being over having earned it by himself. For the first time ever in his life-time, he was big enough and strong enough to do odd jobs and earn money on his own.

"Three dollars, four, four-fifty, five..." he counted out loud, stacking five dimes on the pile to his right.

"Hey Joel, how about a game of ball?" It was Ross Brown. Taking the steps two at a time, Ross stood suddenly in front of his best friend. "What are you doing?" he asked, wearing a quizzical look as he squatted down beside Joel.

"I'm counting how much I earned this week and separating my tithe from the wages."

"Tithe!" Ross exclaimed in utter disbelief. "Tithe! God doesn't expect us to tithe. We're still boys, Joel. Maybe when we get older..."

Joel stopped counting and looked at Ross. "You...you mean you don't tithe?" he asked suddenly.

"Course I don't. It's MY money' I earn it. Mrs. Whaley's yard's as humpy and bumpy as a camel's back. It's hard work mowing her lawn! Besides, she's as cranky and crotchety as Simon was before he died. I tell you, he was the meanest, most hard to please cat we ever had on the farm."

Joel swallowed. "Mrs. Whaley's terribly crippled with arthritis, Ross. I like her, She's a wonderful person: she helped to pray me through. And as to the money you earn being yours, well..."

"Oh, I know what you're going to say, Joel: that it all belongs to God." Ross said, grabbing a straw off the porch and breaking it into little pieces.

"Well it does, doesn't it?" Joel said kindly. "If God didn't give you strength and health, you couldn't work. And if you don't pay your tithe, you're a robber. The Bible says so. And we both know that no robber...nor a thief...can get into Heaven."

"Well. I'm not about to give my hard-earned money away, Joel!"

"Not even one dime out of every dollar to the Lord, Ross?"

"Perhaps when I'm a grown man, I shall, but not now."

Joel's eyes filled with tears. "Oh Ross, you don't mean it! You CAN'T mean it!" he exclaimed. "Not after our Sunday School teacher had us to memorize the entire third chapter of Malachi. You remember when we recited it in unison in church. Brother Novell urged us to put tithing into practice. And there, in his Sunday School class, I promised the Lord that I would pay tithe on every single dime I made, or received. That same week Uncle Harry gave me thirty-five cents for an ice cream cone. Thanking him, I hurried to my bedroom and dropped FIVE pennies into my specially prepared 'Tithe Box.' "

"But you couldn't buy your ice cream cone!" Ross lamented. "Not even ONE dip."

"I didn't starve," Joel replied, laughing softly. "And it was a great lesson in sacrifice for me. Seeing that there wasn't enough for my ice cream cone, I doubled what I had dropped in, making my little box to have exactly TEN cents instead of the five!"

"But why? I mean, what made you do it, Joel?"

"Because I wanted to please the Lord. Oh Ross," Joel said quickly, "it's wonderful to walk in God's light. He blesses my soul and gives me continual joy and inner peace. Paying tithe, and giving offerings of that which He has helped me to earn, is the very least I can do. One penny out of every ten; a dime out of each dollar; fifty cents out of five dollars, it's such a VERY little, Ross."

"You make me feel terrible, Joel. TERRIBLE! I guess I've been a robber. I see it plainly now."

Bounding off the porch, Ross started homeward, calling over his shoulder as he ran, "I'll be back, Joel...as soon as I get MY tithe all counted out."

"Don't forget the offerings, too," Joel said, resuming his counting.

* * * * *

August, 1979

Story 8

JUST-A-MINUTE JIMMY

The hot August sun beat down mercilessly upon Jimmy's head, which was covered by his much loved, nearly-worn-out ragged looking straw hat. It had become an integral part of his being...kind of like an old friend. It was as much a part of his head as his hair was and the only time he took it off was at mealtime and when his mother insisted that he could not...postively and absolutely, could not!...wear it to bed! So, each and every night, (much like when Deanna put her

doll to bed) Jimmy removed the comfortable hat and laid it gently and carefully on the stand beside his bed, grabbing it first thing in the morning and putting it back on his head.

Pulling one of his father's big red handkerchiefs out of his pocket now, Jimmy mopped the perspiration from his face. Glancing at the wagon, partially filled with melons, cantaloupes and sweet corn, he sighed tiredly, wishing for all the world that he could sit and rest somewhere in the shade.

He looked across the melon patch and down the long rows of fragrant smelling sweet corn, then he looked at the wagon again. Why did he have to load the wagon day after day after day? he wondered bitterly. Why couldn't Jeremy and Sandy load it for a change and let him take care of the fruit and vegetable stand beneath the shady maple trees beside their big farmhouse? It wasn't fair, no indeed!

With that thought floating round and round inside Jimmy's ten-year-old-head, he raced to a nearby apple tree and stretched out on the cool grass in the shade, not caring that the wagon was not nearly full, nor even caring about the stand nor his sister and brother.

"Jim-my. Jim-my! Hurry! The Smiths want their sweet corn." Sandy's voice reached his ears in a clear, precise way.

Jimmy plugged his ears with his index fingers and pretended not to hear.

"Jimmy, hurry!" Sandy called loudly again.

"Just a minute!" he shouted, rolling over on his stomach and closing his eyes. What did Sandy think he was, a work horse? he wondered, deciding that Mrs. Smith would just have to wait while he cooled off a bit. "Jim-my! PLEASE!"

"Just a minute," he called back again in a sleepy tone of voice. "JIM-MY! JIM-MY!"

Sandy's voice now fell on deaf ears: Jimmy was fast asleep, fanned by the gentle breezes that moved the branches of the apple tree back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

Jimmy never knew that Jeremy had come to the field and finished filling the wagon with the corn which the Smiths had ordered, pulling the loaded wagon home as fast as his legs would take him, nor did Jimmy know that Jeremy had been back to the melon and vegetable patch four times after that and taken the loaded wagon to the little stand beside the farm house on the shady lawn. Jimmy didn't even feel it when Squeaky, a furry little gray field mouse, ran over his hand and looked curiously into his face then jumped on to his ragged looking straw hat and played on top of it for a while; nor did he feel it when the sudden, big, dark gray cloud dropped its first tears on to the apple tree. No, Jimmy just didn't feel it...not until the rain and the hail pelted his face with stinging beads that felt like they were shot from a gun. Then he sat bolt upright. What was happening? he wondered quickly.

Suddenly Jimmy remembered...about the wagon; the melons; the Smiths' sweet corn; the fruit stand beneath the maple trees; about Sandy and Jeremy. But it had been so hot

Down poured the rain and the little hard balls of ice-hail. It ran off the brim of Jimmy's old straw hat like he'd seen it do off the barn roof. His clothes were dripping wet and he was cold. Cold! He felt almost like he was freezing. Oh, if only he could run home and get warm. But it was raining too fast and too hard to leave the tree. Lightning, too!

Suddenly Jimmy was scared. He knew how dangerous it was to be under a tree when there was lightning! Without warning, hot tears stung his eyes and rolled down his suntanned cheeks. Why was he always so careless about doing his work? he wondered as conviction gripped his heart. Each and every time Father or Mother had told him to do something he had told them 'just a minute,' then forgot all about the work he was to have done. Forgetting and disobeying had become so easy for him, he realized with sudden alarm and fear.

Jimmy fell to his knees and prayed. He knew what he must do, and the sooner he did it the easier it would be.

Long after the rain had stopped falling Jimmy stood to his feet with a smile on his face. He was born again! Made new in Christ! How wonderful his heart felt.

Feeling as light as a feather, Jimmy ran toward the house. The old 'Just-A-Minute' Jimmy was dead; the new 'Here-Am-I' Jimmy was changed completely and ready to prove it. He must tell Father and Mother and Jeremy and Sandy all about it.

He ran faster now.

* * * * *

September, 1979

Story 9

JEANNIE'S HEART

Slosh, slosh; slosh, slosh, went Jeannie's shiny, new red boots as she walked down the sidewalk toward the school building one block away. Bright red and orange and yellow leaves tumbled merrily and playfully from the maple trees and dropped on the sidewalk at Jeannie's feet, but the little girl never even noticed them. No indeed. Her mind was on other things...things like Marie and John Harmon and their beautiful singing voices. Why did they have to move into the neighborhood and attend the same school as she did? she wondered, knowing for sure that she would never again get the leading part in singing.

Slosh, slosh; slosh, slosh, went the pretty new boots, and why? why? why? why? went the questions inside Jeannie's pretty head as she walked in the gently-falling rain.

"Hi Jeannie," Janelle Lewis called from across the street.

But Jeannie didn't answer. Why? Why? Why? her brain kept asking; slosh, slosh, slosh, slosh, went the shiny red boots.

A hot, salty tear slid out of one of Jeannie's big blue eyes and fell to the ground on the leaves. No, she would never, never get any more leading parts in singing at school. Only yesterday, Mrs. Crockett told the class how wonderful John and Marie's voices were. "I have big plans for this year, music-wise," she had added.

And that's when the why's began floating round and round inside Jeannie's head.

And now, something dark and sinister rose up inside Jeannie's heart. The more she thought about John and Marie, the more wicked the thing got inside her heart. It was like a giant monster...she hated Marie and John. With all her heart, she hated them! This year they would be taking the place which rightfully belonged to her! They would be in the lime-light; not Jeannie Adams.

The thought was so bitter and painful as to make Jeannie cry. "I hate school!" she said aloud. "Hate it!"

Slosh, slosh; slosh, slosh, went the shiny, new red boots; "I hate John!" hate Marie!" Jeannie's heart kept saying. Blinded by her tears, Jeannie stumbled and fell, ker-splash, on her face. "Oh-h-h, my leg! My leg!" she moaned, feeling suddenly very, very funny and hearing something that sounded like bells ringing in her ears before fainting away.

When she finally regained consciousness and opened her eyes, she saw her mother and father standing by her bedside. "Where am I?" she asked, trying to get up. "And where are my pretty red boots? Why aren't they on my feet? Oh-h! Oh-h-h! My leg!" she moaned.

"Lie still," her father said, patting her gently. "You fell and broke your leg," he explained, "and you're in the hospital. What happened, Jeannie? You knew the men were working on the sidewalk. How come you fell into the hole? There's plenty of room on the right side of the pavement. Why did you walk so near the curb?"

Jeannie buried her face in the soft pillow as everything came suddenly back to her. "It's all because of John and Marie!" she exclaimed accusingly. "I hate them!"

"Jeannie! No. No!" her mother cried.

"But I do!" the little girl affirmed positively. "If they hadn't come here I'd still be getting the lead part in Mrs. Crockett's music class. Now I'll never get it again..."

"So-o!" Mr. Adams said, as understanding dawned upon him. " 'jealousy is cruel as the grave,' " he quoted, " 'the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.' Song of Solomon 8:6. Then too, Proverbs 27:4 says, 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?' Your heart is like a pit full of deadly, poisonous vipers..." "Daddy!"

"It's true, honey," Mrs. Adams said tearfully. "Jealousy and envy are making you hate Marie and John. And unless you get these peace-robbers and joy stealers out of your heart and life you'll burn forever and ever in the lake of fire. You got saved a few weeks ago, but you need the Holy Ghost to burn out every single trace of carnality from your heart. But you'll have to ask the Lord's forgiveness for your attitude and bitter feelings toward John and Marie before the fire of Pentecost will fall on you and purify your heart and life."

Jeannie wept silently as Mother talked. When she had finished speaking, the little girl said brokenly, "I... guess I didn't realize that I had such dreadfully-frightening things inside my heart. O Mother, I don't want them there any longer. I don't! I don't! It's terrible, this thing that rose up in my heart. It was like some giant monster dictating to me; making me hate John and Marie. Please, please pray for me. I don't care if I never get another leading part in all my life. I want victory!" And Jeannie began to pray.

"What a changed girl!" the nurse commented when she came into the room a short time later. "You look happy!" she added, popping a thermometer in Jeannie's mouth and smiling down into her face.

"I'm very, very happy!" Jeannie answered, opening her mouth just long enough to make the statement.

Weeks passed, and Jeannie started back to school once again. Slosh, slosh; slosh, slosh, went the still-shiny new red boots; love; love, love, sang Jeannie's happy, Spirit-filled heart, She could hardly wait till she saw John and Marie, to tell them how happy she was that they had the leading parts in Mrs. Crockett's music class.

School was wonderful, Jeannie thought, as she hurried to the big building.

* * * * *

October, 1979

Story 10

THE PUMPKIN'S MESSAGE

The warm October sunshine filtered through the colored leaves into the schoolroom. June, sitting on the edge of her seat, was ready and waiting when the dismissal bell rang. Without lingering or loitering, she hurried outside, skipping happily away from the red brick building.

October was one of her very favorite months of the year. She loved its brilliant, flame-colored leaves and its softly-warm days and crisply-cool nights. There was so much beauty everywhere this time of year that she didn't want to miss a single beautiful thing. Life had new meaning for her since she got saved and sanctified wholly. Not only was her heart new and made perfect in Divine Love, but the world in which she lived seemed to have been made new and all-different, too.

"June. June..." A voice called behind her. It was her brother, Joshua.

"Wait," he called, breathless from running. "Where are you going so fast?" he asked, falling in step beside her.

"Home, Joshua. It's just that the other girls chatter so much. And I like to be alone so I can listen to the birds sing and see the pretty leaves as they spin crazily to the ground. The girls at school think I'm odd and peculiar because I enjoy these things; but I love them. All they talk about is what they see on television. I feel sorry for them, Joshua. They don't know what they're missing by not getting outdoors and listening to things like laughing brooks and leaves falling, or to a robin's song and the cardinal's whistle."

question. "Rod Keeley's so wrapped up in certain television programs that he said he can hardly wait to get home to watch these things. Know what he plans to do on Halloween, June?" "What?" "He said he's going to dress up like one of the robbers on television., gun and everything...then he's going over to Mrs. Woodcuff's house and scare her for all she's worth."

June's mouth flew open wide. "But he can't do that, Joshua! Mrs. Woodcuff's all alone since her husband died; and she has a bad heart, too."

"That's what he plans to do. He said Halloween was made for pulling pranks."

"We'll see about that!" June said emphatically. "We'll tell Father and Mother and they'll think of some way to help Mrs. Woodcuff. Halloween or no Halloween, no one has the right to frighten and scare helpless widows. Mother said Halloween had its beginning in paganism and that Christians should not follow after the customs of heathens and pagans. And I know what you and I are going to do this year, Joshua..."

Joshua spun around so fast that he almost fell flat on his face. "What?" he asked, his eyes shining bright with eager anticipation.

"We'll have lighted pumpkins all right, but they're going to preach a sermon."

Joshua gasped. "A...sermon? But June, pumpkins can't talk, much less preach!"

June laughed softly. Grabbing her brother by the hand, she said, "Trust me, Joshua; our pumpkins are going to preach a message. Now hurry. We'll go to the field and pick out just the right size. Daddy has hundreds of them so he won't mind."

And away the pair ran.....

* * *

A big, full yellow-orange moon hung his lantern in the sky, bathing the dewy meadows and the village and the valley in a softly-silver light. The air was crisp and cool, with a hint of frost in it and the earth smelled wondrously fresh and clean. From porches and through windows, lighted pumpkins shone, their upside-down smiles and sinister looking faces warning all who looked at them to beware.

Rod, outfitted in his robber's costume, stomped noisily up to Mrs. Woodcuff's door and knocked loudly.

The house was dark; there was no answer.

He knocked again; then he banged upon the door with his fists. "Open the door!" he shouted in a gruffly-demanding tone of voice.

With a suddenness that surprised even Rod, the door swung ajar as lights went on inside ten fat, deep-orange-red pumpkins whose carved-out letters seemed to shout that J-E-S-U-S S-A-V-E-S.

"Hi Rod," June said, lifting the wicked looking face mask long enough for all to see Rod's face. "Won't you join us?" she asked. "Mrs. Woodcuff popped a big bowl of popcorn. It's scrumptious; all buttery and..."

Without answering, Rod stomped off the porch.

"Come back!" June called. "Mrs. Woodcuff is going to tell us about life on the prairie."

"Who cares about such things!" Rod retorted angrily. "I'm going to have fun, even if you did ruin it for me here."

"Don't forget, Rod, you'll reap what you're sowing," June called sweetly after the boy.

Closing the door quietly, June went into the kitchen. Not too many "beggars" would bother Mrs. Woodcuff, she was sure: not with the pumpkins preaching in their shining, silent way!

* * * * *

November, 1979

Story 11

THE BEST THINGS

Jerrilyn smoothed the quilt on her bed, then she plumped the three decorative throw pillows and positioned them "just right" on top of the gaily-patterned quilt before hurrying down the stairs to the kitchen where her mother was busy making pies.

"I wish we had nicer furniture," she said quickly as she stared through the partially-opened window to the lawn beyond the house.

Mrs. Crady stopped crimping the edge of the pies that were almost ready to go into the oven and turned quickly to look at her little girl. "Whatever has given you such a thought, Jerri?" she asked, her eyes misty with tears.

Seeing the look in her mother's kind eyes, Jerrilyn said, "O I know we have some nice things but...well...Julie..."

"You mean you're ashamed to have Julie over tonight!" Mother commented sadly. "But she wanted to come, didn't she, dear?" she asked quickly.

"O yes. Julie loves the way you and Daddy and all of us treat her. It's just that she has ever so many beautiful things. Why, her bed even has a ruffly dotted Swiss canopy over it; and it matches the curtains at the windows; and her bedspread does, too. She has a record player and one entire wall with built-in book shelves for books and anything else she wants to put on them."

Mrs. Crady sighed. "I'm sorry you feel this way, Jerri," she said, finishing the pretty edges around the pies. "There are things of far more importance than fine furnishings and materialism. But then, this is a lesson you must yet learn. Now finish your chores then brush your hair. I'll braid it for YOU as soon as I'm through with the baking."

Hurrying to the bathroom, Jerrilyn gathered the soiled towels and washclothes together and took them into the laundry room. Next she scoured and cleaned the sink and the bath tub and straightened the scatter rugs until they laid flat and neatly in order on the floor, then she brushed her long hair until it shone, making sure that the tangles were all out. When she was finished, she stood in the doorway and looked at the now-neat bathroom, deciding that even Julie would think it looked pretty, old though the fixtures were.

The day wore slowly away and by five o'clock Jerrilyn was ready for her friend's arrival, her face washed and clean and her braids shining and wearing soft blue ribbons in them that matched her dress perfectly.

"O how pretty you look!" Julie exclaimed, hurrying down the sidewalk to Jerrilyn's door. "Why, Jerri," she said quickly, "your hair ribbons are exactly like your dress. How beautiful!"

"Mother made them for me, Julie; the same time she made my dress. She always does this for Anna and me."

Julie's eyes clouded over. They looked almost like the sky looked when it got ready to rain, Jerrilyn thought, wondering what she had said to bring about the sudden change in her friend's disposition.

"You...you're lucky," Julie said, following Jerrilyn inside the house. "My mother never makes me anything..."

"But you have lovely dresses, Julie!"

"Bought ones, yes; but nothing made by Mother. Never!" "I...I'm sorry...."

"How nice to see you, Julie dear!" the Cradys exclaimed as Jerrilyn brought her friend into the kitchen, where supper waited on the table and where four smiling faces greeted her.

"I made your favorite kind of salad and pie, Julie," Mrs. Crady said, putting an arm around the little girl and ushering her to the chair next to Jerrilyn's. "Jerri told me what you are especially fond of..."

Julie swallowed hard. She could scarcely talk. "Jerri's so...so...lucky!" she finally stammered, bowing her head while Mr. Crady returned thanks for the food.

After the supper dishes were washed and dried Jerrilyn took her friend upstairs. "This is where you'll be staying," she said unenthusiastically.

"What a beautiful room!" Julie exclaimed, clapping her hands together. "Did your mother make that quilt on your bed? And those throw pillows; they're beautiful! And just look at that window seat! You're so lucky, Jerrilyn. This is the prettiest room I've ever seen."

Jerrilyn stood with her mouth wide open. "Do you like it, Julie?" she suddenly asked. "I mean, really like it?"

"O Jerri, how silly of you to ask; I love it. Love it.' Why, I'd give anything to have a room like yours. Love made this room. Everywhere I look I see it and feel it -- the rugs your mother hooked and braided, the quilt and pillows she made, and your pretty ruffled curtains, too; then there's the window seat and the beautiful doll house your father built for you and Anna. O Jerrilyn, I wish I lived in a home like yours. My mother and father are so busy working and running around. I get terribly lonely sometimes."

Tears filled Jerrilyn's eyes. "I'm sorry, Julie," she said softly as they began playing with the dolls and the doll house and the many toys from within the window seat chest.

"Hey, you two," Joe called from the doorway, "how about a taffy pull and...."

"And popping pop corn!" Anna piped up from beside her brother.

"That sounds wonderful!" Julie admitted, excitement registering in her voice and on her face as she followed the others to the kitchen and helped to make the delicious taffy and popcorn balls.

"Julie's a lucky girl," she told Mr. and Mrs. Crady, "I only wish our home was like this. We never do things together," she said, stretching the taffy between her buttered hands until it couldn't stretch anymore. "My father and mother are too busy to do, things like this with us. O I love it here

at your house. I do wish I could stay forever and ever. There's love and kindness here; and...and God lives here too..."

During family worship that night, with Julie kneeling beside her at the sofa, Jerrilyn asked Jesus to forgive her for her attitude of that morning. "You've given me the very best things in life, Jesus dear," she said, weeping softly, "and from now on I'm going to thank you for them: Thanks, for Mother and Father and Joe and Anna; they love me; and thanks for our beautiful home where love rules; thanks for Julie and thanks for..."

On and on Jerrilyn's thankful heart prayed. Never again would she be ashamed of her home...not so long as the hearts of those living inside its walls stayed all glorious within. Like her mother said, there were things of far greater importance than beautiful furniture and furnishings and Julie had helped her to see what some of these things were, she thought happily, squeezing her friend's hand affectionately.

* * * * *

December, 1979

Story 12

TERRY'S CHRISTMAS

All day long the snow fell. It covered the sidewalk and the bushes and clothed the naked, bare arms of the maple trees in Terry's yard with a coat of thick, soft, fluffy white, which looked for all the world like Mother's seven minute frosting that she made and spread on the scrumptious chocolate cake in the kitchen.

"Terry," Mother called, paging him from the kitchen, where the delightfully-delicious aroma of baking cinnamon rolls reached his nostrils and made his mouth water. "Grandma Waite's walk and porch will need to be shoveled and cleaned of snow."

Terry hurried from the window into the kitchen, saying, "I'll do it right now, Mother."

"Not before you have a little treat, dear," Mother said, pushing a glass of milk and a big, plump, still-hot cinnamon roll across the table toward her son.

"Um-m, delicious! Thanks, Morn," Terry said, smiling into the kind face near his own and biting the freshly-baked roll.

Terry finished the roll then hurried away. He loved Grandma Waite and he enjoyed doing favors for her, too. Her little cottage-home -- just four doors away -- reminded him of a story-book house with its brightly-colored calico curtains dressing up the yellow shuttered windows and the bright red geraniums blooming brilliantly in their snowy-white pots on the wide window sills inside.

Snow whipped around Terry's feet and legs as he cleared Grandma's sidewalk before stepping up on to the porch, and the wind moaned mournfully through the trees.

Street lights came on just then and Terry realized suddenly that it was dark inside the humble but neat cottage-home of the aged widow. He started to knock but backed quickly away as he heard Grandma praying: "And dear Father," she said, "Thou hast promised to supply all my needs... You know my old shawl's worn out..."

Grabbing the broom that stood beside the door, Terry worked feverishly. Grandma must never, never know that he had heard her prayer! But one thing was sure, her prayer would be answered!

Walking home in the early darkness, the boy's heart hammered with excitement. He would be God's instrument to answer the prayer for the beloved old woman. Yes indeed. Christmas was just one week away!

Placing his boots on the plastic runner inside the kitchen door and hanging his coat and cap neatly on a hanger inside the closet, Terry hurried to his bedroom where he counted the money that was in his bank. Tomorrow, the Lord willing, he would go to Hayes Department Store and buy the nicest, warmest shawl the store had, he decided, feeling all warm and good inside.

The sun was shining brightly in Terry's bedroom window when he awoke the following morning. Jumping out of bed, he dressed in record time then hurried downstairs to tell his father and mother about the shawl.

"That's a wonderful idea!" his father said, adding, "Your mother and I will take you downtown and help you select the finest, warmest shawl Hayes have in the store."

A silver looking quarter moon hung its lantern in the sky as Terry walked from his house to Grandma Waite's house on Christmas eve. From a near-by church came the beautiful strains of Silent Night and farther down the street a group of young people were singing Christmas carols.

Stepping noiselessly up on the porch, Terry walked to the door of the aged woman's house and placed the beautifully-wrapped package against the door before knocking loudly and running away...to hide behind some near-by bushes.

The door opened and the box tumbled inside. From his point of vantage, Terry saw it all. Grandma picked the box up lovingly then stepped outside to welcome her caller. But no one was in sight.

"Thank You, Father dear! Thank You, for whatever the gift may be. And, Lord, please bless the giver abundantly!" Terry heard her say before she walked inside and closed the door.

After the key turned in the lock of the door, Terry came out of his place of hiding and started homeward, feeling rich and warm and wonderful on the inside. Grandma now had the answer to her prayer, plus a twenty-dollar bill from his parents.

The carolers were getting closer now and Terry, feeling like shouting, joined their singing.

* * * * *

THE END