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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1980

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1-a
KARA'S BREAD ON THE WATERS

Chapter 1

Kara ran as fast as she could toward her home on the mission compound. Her heart hammered inside her chest and her lovely face was bathed in perspiration.

"Mother! Mother!" she cried, when she was inside the door. "My Bible! My Bible! I mean, Mako Toto's Bible; the one I gave her for her birthday..."

"Kara dear, whatever has happened?" Mrs. Eldon asked, putting her arms around her little girl and drawing her close to her heart. "Get calm, honey, then tell me what happened."

Between tears, and trying to get her breath, Kara said, "It's terrible, Mother. Terrible!" "Dreadful, I think you must mean." "Dreadful and terrible!" the child declared emphatically. "Mako Toto's grandmother took her Bible...her beautiful, beautiful Bible that I bought with the pennies and nickels and dimes and quarters I saved.., and she tore the pages out. She...she's going to use it...to...cover the walls in their sitting room. Mako Toto's heart-broken and... and so am I."

A shower of tears cascaded over the long, blonde eyelashes and danced down Kara's cheeks. For a long while, Mrs. Eldon was silent, then she asked quickly, "Didn't you give Mako the Bible for Jesus' glory, honey?"

"Why, yes, of course I did. But now...O Mother, I guess I'm just not a good missionary after all. Mako Toto and I were so sure her grandmother would learn how to read the Bible and that she'd get saved; now this will never happen. And Mako and I have prayed so hard for her grandmother!"

Leading her daughter to a chair, Mrs. Eldon said, "Hush, Kara; push your doubts away...entirely...and believe God."

"But Mother..."

"No 'buts,' honey! We are told to cast our bread upon the waters; and just as surely as we do, Ecclesiastes 11:1 declares that we shall find it after many days. You have 'cast your bread,' in the gift of the Bible to Mako Toto, and now you must trust God's All-wise ways and His doings for the results with her grandmother. We'll pray about it together, right now. Then you must not worry nor fret about it again, Kara dear. Look how many years your father and I have worked and labored here; and think of all the earnest prayers, and the many tears we shed, before we saw our first convert! You have sown the seed among your many little friends and God gave you Mako Toto as your first sheaf--your first convert--now you must continue trusting Him to get to the grandmother's heart. This Jesus way is all new to her."

Kara shuddered as she said, "Her gods are scary, Mother. In fact, the house seems to be full of evil spirits. I'm sure that's what it is, for it gives me chills when I go in. It's really bad after she has a service, (or whatever they call it) to one of her gods."

"Plead the Blood, Kara. There's power in the Blood of Jesus."

"I do, Oh, I do, Mother; and I know I'm safe. Mako's grandmother looked at me so strangely last week, when I went into the house with Mako. She said [brought another spirit with me."

Mrs. Eldon turned quickly and looked at her daughter with troubled eyes. "She did!" she exclaimed quickly. "What did you say?"

"I told her not to be afraid; that my Jesus--God went with me everywhere I went; that He was with me in her house."

"Was she angry?"

"I don't think so. She just stared at me with sad eyes."

"Perhaps you had better not go inside the house again, Kara."

Kara gasped. "But Mother, Mako wants me to go see her grandmother. She said I help her; that she doesn't make as many offerings to her gods when I'm around."

Mrs. Eldon let out a sigh of relief. "Well," she said, "in that case, you may go; I'll not stop you. Jesus may well be using you to get to the grandmother's heart. She seems rather kind to small children and she does allow her little granddaughter to come to the mission services. Her heart may be softening."

"Missionary! Missionary!" a voice sobbed outside the window. "Do something, please!"

"It...it's Mako Toto!" Kara exclaimed, rushing outside.

"Please, please!" the little girl begged. "Do something! Help me!"

"What's wrong, Mako? Tell me. Please do," Kara begged, taking her friend by the hand and leading her into the house.

The sobbing girl stood inside the door. Her large, round, dark eyes were deep pools of sadness. "My...my grandmother...forbids me to...to...come to the mission church...ever again!" Mako stammered; adding hopefully, "But you will help me, Missionary Eldon, will you not?"

Mrs. Eldon stooped down and drew the child into the circle of her arms. Wiping Mako's tears, she said, "God will help you, honey. Do you love Jesus enough to suffer for Him, if this is His will and His way of bringing Grandmother to God?"

Mako's small shoulders straightened. In an unwavering tone, she replied, "I am. But I shall miss the services so much."

Pointing to Mako's heart, Mrs. Eldon said, "You have God's word hidden away inside you. That Word will feed you and guide you; and it will also keep you from sinning...against God, yourself and your grandmother. I'm going to pray with you now, Mako Toto, that God will make you strong, and that Grandmother's understanding will be opened to the Jesus way..."

Long after Mother had prayed, and when her little friend was gone, Kara stood inside the house, wondering what would happen to Mako.

(What will happen, boys and girls? -- See Chapter II)

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February, 1980

Story 1-b

KARA'S BREAD ON THE WATERS

Chapter 2

Week after week went by; Mako Toto's absence from the mission church left a vacancy and a void so deep as to fill Kara's heart with grief. Her very first convert, she thought...her ONLY convert--to be deprived of attending church services!

It didn't seem real, the little girl thought, remembering her many friends and cousins in America who attended church every week just as regularly as they ate and slept. Suppose Mako turned her back on God and started worshipping idols! And what if she would never get another Bible to read?

The thoughts sent Kara to her bedroom, to pray for her friend.

Mako Toto, meanwhile, busied herself keeping Grandmother's house tidy and clean while the older woman prepared the walls for papering.

"I like this bright red on these pages," Grandmother told Mako Toto one day as she spread the torn-out Bible pages on the table, readying them for pasting.

A big lump popped into the very center of Mako's throat when she saw the pages of her beloved, Holy Book on the table. Then a new thought--a new idea!--came to her mind.

"Please, Grandmother," she asked politely, "may I help you put it on the walls? I shall be ever so careful with it. And, put the black print near the top and the pretty red print lower; near where your nose reaches. I could even put the lowest pieces on the wall for you. It would keep your back from hurting."

Grandmother's eyes laughed back into Mako Toto's. "That's a good idea, Little One," she said, calling Mako by her pet name. "You have been a good child. Be careful not to spill the paste and don't spoil a single piece of the precious paper. I'll begin at the top, using the black pages from the very beginning of the book..."

"And I'll sort through these red pages, and some of the others, Grandmother, and get them ready to put on the wall."

Mako hummed softly while she worked, Her heart was full of thanksgiving and praise to God. To think, she, mused silently, that the very Book which Grandmother had despised, and the Book which she, Mako Toto, had thought she'd never be able to read again in Grandmother's house, would now be out where she could slip away and read it whenever she wanted to. Never again would she have to steal away into some dark corner and read. God WAS answering her prayers! Those of her little friend, too. If Grandmother could only read! Mako thought sadly.

"That's a pretty song you're humming, Mako," Grandmother said, breaking into her grand-daughter's pleasant thoughts. "What is it? I mean, are there words to it?"

Mako paused with her sorting and putting together some of her very favorite Scriptures; those which she thought would be the best on the wall. "Yes, it has words, Grandmother. Beautiful words."

"Then sing them, child; don't just hum."

In a clear, sweet voice, Mako sang,

" 'There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus--
No, not one; no not one.
None else could heal all my soul's diseases--
No, not one; no, not one.' "

"What strange words, Little One! But the tune is beautiful. Certainly you don't believe what you have just sung?"

Mako prayed for strength and courage. In a soft, fearless voice, she said, "Yes, Grandmother, I do believe the words; Jesus is my best and dearest friend."

Grandmother clucked her tongue against the roof of her mouth several times to demonstrate her disapproval. Then she added quickly, "Well, I guess it can do you no harm. You will know better when you are older. At least you are a far better, more obedient child since going to the mission church." Then, in a voice so low that Mako barely heard, the woman added, "Perhaps I was a bit too rash in making you stop going there."

Mako stood as one in shock. Did she hear her grandmother rightly! She looked up at Grandmother, but the woman was absorbed now in putting the 'paper' on the wall.

Mako caressed the torn out, carefully trimmed Bible pages, stopping again and again to read the precious words. It was like her soul had found a great refreshing fountain of water; she literally drank the words in.

She paused and looked at her grandmother. Already she had the first row pasted against the wall. "And to think that it didn't cost me anything!" Mako heard her say as she stood back and looked at the change which the paper on the wall had made in the room.

Mako raised her dark eyes toward heaven and prayed a simple prayer. "Save Grandmother's soul, please, dear Jesus!" she whispered. Then she set about her work in earnest again. The Psalms, she thought! They must be put near the red print--the words of Jesus, Kara had said the red print was.

Mako smiled. Why, it was a letter from God to her! Yes, really and truly, a letter from God--to HER.

(See Chapter 3 as Mako becomes a REAL missionary, boys and girls.)

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March 1980

Story 1-c
KARA'S BREAD ON THE WATERS

Chapter 3

Mako Toto was very tired when night-time came. Grandmother and she had worked hard, and now the walls were finished. Her Bible--her precious treasure which Grandmother had

discovered one day by accident and which she had torn out piece by piece--was pasted on the walls for wall paper.

In spite of the hurt inside her over the knowledge that she could no longer hold Kara's beautiful Bible --gift to her heart in a loving embrace, Mako was relieved to know that her Bible at least was not destroyed by burning. Grandmother wasn't as hard-hearted as Shining Gem's mother, who burned her Bible when she found it hidden in a dark corner.

Mako Toto sighed tiredly as she prepared for bed, and just before she jumped onto her padded kang, she prayed earnestly for Grandmother.

In spite of her weariness, the little girl could not sleep. The pretty missionary, Mrs. Eldon, had told her that the Bible words., many of the verses., were in her heart. In Mako Toto's heart! And it was true; every single word of it was true. And now those same precious and wonderful words were not only inside her heart, keeping her happy in Jesus and making her faithful to Him in spite of the fact that she dare not go to the mission church, but the words were all over the walls of the sitting room . . . where everybody could read them. It was almost as if she were dreaming, she thought.

A warm tear stole out of Mako's eye; she wept for happiness. Her God was taking care of her. He was going to use the "wallpaper" in a beautiful way. She felt it.

Over her bowl of rice and vegetables the next day, Grandmother said, "Mako, you must do all the cleaning again today; I don't feel too well. Perhaps I over-did it yesterday, putting the papers on the wall."

Fear clutched Mako's little heart. She had never known Grandmother to be sick. Quickly she bowed her head in silent prayer, and just as she did so, the beautiful Shepherd Psalm sang itself consolingly back and forth in her heart.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Don't worry, Grandmother," Mako Toto said quickly; softly. "I will do all the work. Go and lie down."

"Thank you, Little One. You have been so kind and good to me. I shall sit here in the kitchen and rest; the kang seems too hard for my aching back right now."

Mako cleared the low table, then she cleaned the house from one end to the other, being extra-careful to sweep in the corners and beneath the furnishings like Grandmother did. When she returned to the kitchen, grandmother's eyes were closed. Her hands were folded across her heart.

"Grandmother," Mako said softly as she touched the wrinkled hand, "do you want me to sing to you?"

The woman's eyes fluttered open. "Not now, Little One; I feel too tired."

Mako stroked the graying hair back then she threw her arms around Grandmother's neck and kissed her gently on her cheek.

"Thank you, Mako; thank you," Grandmother said. "Now run along and do as you like while I rest."

Mako kissed Grandmother again, then she hurried away to the sitting room to read from the Bible pages pasted on the wall. How glad she was that she had learned to read at the mission school!

For two days Grandmother ate only a meager portion of food. Mako's heart became increasingly alarmed.

"Shall I go to the mission station for the doctor?" she asked on the third day.

"No, Little One, I will be all right after this tiredness goes away."

"But Grandmother, unless you eat more food you will never grow stronger!" Mako declared emphatically.

"Don't worry about the food, Little One; Grandmother will eat when she is hungry. Sing me that song again."

Mako's heart seemed to dance inside her chest. "No, not one, Grandmother? You mean the song I was humming a few days ago?" "Yes, Child."

"All right, Grandmother, dear." In a clear, sweet voice, Mako sang,

"There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus--
No, not one; no, not one..."

When she had finished, she noticed that grandmother had fallen asleep. Very quietly, she tip-toed into the sitting room and for a long time she read the beautiful words on the wall.

"You like the wallpaper, I see." It was Grandmother's voice.

Mako turned around so quickly that she almost fell over a little stool in the room. She hadn't heard Grandmother enter.

"It... it talks to me," the child replied softly.

"Talks to you! Why, Mako child, how strange! What does it say?"

"Many things, dear Grandmother. While I sip my tea, it talks to me."

"Tell them to me, Little One! You must keep nothing from Grandmother."

"It says here that the Great God in Heaven had a Son. And people were so wicked and sinful that God didn't know what greater thing to do to redeem them than to send His very own Son down to earth to die for them, that they might be saved."

Grandmother's eyes grew great and large with wonder and amazement. She seated herself on the little stool over which Mako Toto had nearly fallen. "Does it really say that, Mako Child? And is the Son come?"

"Yes, it says that, Really and truly, Grandmother. And God's Son came."

"Di... did... He die, Little One? Really die?"

"Yes, Grandmother. It says here that He offered Himself up willingly"

"For... for..., wicked ones, such as... I!" Grandmother exclaimed, closing her eyes and rocking back and forth on the little stool.

(See Chapter IV for more.)

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April, 1980

Story 1-d

KARA'S BREAD ON THE WATERS

Chapter 4

Mako watched her grandmother carefully. How she wished her little friend, Kara, were here. Or the missionaries. They could explain things so much better to Grandmother, she was sure.

Presently, the older woman ceased rocking back and forth. Sitting on the edge of the stool, she said, "Tell me, Little One, does the wallpaper tell more? Something about God's Son talks to my heart, too! My... heart . . . is wicked! Does . . . the wallpaper say if . . . if God's Son came to... save me? Was it just for a select few, I wonder, His dying?"

"Oh, no, Grandmother. No! It says here that whosoever will may have everlasting life. But first, we must come."

"Come where, Mako? To whom? I have gone to my gods hundreds and hundreds of times, offering them only the best, and they have never brought peace to my heart."

Mako Toto's heart hammered inside her chest. Would she dare tell Grandmother that her gods would never bring peace and rest to her soul? Or would she get angry, perhaps, and punish her?

Praying silently, Mako lifted her chin upwards. "Your gods cannot help you, Grandmother," she said softly, but fearlessly now. "They are dead! The God of the talking wallpaper is alive! He is the only God; beside Him there is no other. It says so here."

"Then read it to me, Child."

"All right, Grandmother dear. Here is one that says, 'For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which re . . re-gard-eth not persons, nor taketh reward:...

" 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave '

" 'Here's another, Grandmother; this says, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,'"

" 'The only true God!' " Grandmother exclaimed quietly--softly to no one but herself. "True God," she repeated. "Then... then there must be false gods, Mako. True God, the wallpaper said. Did you read it right, Child? You're such a little thing to be reading so well."

"I'll read it again, Grandmother: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' "

"O, listen to what the wallpaper has to say on this piece, Grandmother! 'This then is the message that we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.'

" 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him; and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"

"That must refer to the Great God's Son, Mako; do you not think so?"

"It is His Son, Grandmother. His only Son! Oh, why should He have suffered so for me!"

"Or me/" the grandmother cried aloud in painful exclamation. "I wonder what I must do so that He will accept my offerings. I feel strange inside; ever since we pasted the paper on the walls."

"He wants no gifts, Grandmother, other than that you should come to Him and tell Him to forgive you for sinning. He is not like the gods which you have been serving. This Great God in Heaven accepts only a broken and a contrite heart, or spirit. Listen to what the wallpaper says here!" Mako exclaimed happily. "It talks loudly! But you must listen carefully, Grandmother; listen with your heart."

"I'm listening, Little One, with all my heart."

"Then you will not be sorry." Tracing the words with her dainty index finger, Mako Toto read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Confess our sins! To whom, I wonder? Oh, dear child, I have told the gods countless times that I have sinned, and that I am sorry for my sins. They have done nothing to relieve me of the pain and the heavy burden I carry constantly inside my chest. I am weighted down, Mako Child; my burden is more than I can bear. I want it lifted; taken away. But where do I go? Who--or what--will remove it from my heart?" By now Grandmother was on her feet, wringing her hands and pacing back and forth across the floor.

"You did not listen with all of your heart!" the child said gently, touching Grandmother's arm ever so lightly. "The paper says 'If we confess our sins'--to God in Heaven--'He'--God's Son, Jesus; the One who died for us--'is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' He wants you to come!"

"But how do I come, Mako?" "Kneel beside the little stool," the child instructed simply, "and talk to God like you are talking to me. Tell Him about your heavy burden and confess your sins to Him. 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins'."

For a brief moment the woman's eyes searched those of her granddaughter, then, in utter simplicity, she obeyed.

Her prayer was simple but from the heart, and when she got to her feet, a short time later, and was weeping for joy--with Mako folded in her arms--the little girl knew that the angels in Heaven were rejoicing with them, too.

"Go and find the missionaries, Mako," she said, standing suddenly straight and tall. "Bring little missionary Kara, also. They shall be here when I destroy my idols. Dead gods is what they are! Today they go; my house shall be dedicated to the only true God."

With shining eyes, Mako Toto hurried out the door. Her feet seemed to have wings. Today--yes, today!-- Kara's and her prayers were answered; and Kara's bread, which she had cast upon the waters in the gift of a Bible, was coming back to her, in a born-again soul--Mako's very own grandmother!

* * * * *

May, 1980

Story 2

INSIDE THE HEART

Slosh, slosh, slosh, went Jeremy's boots as he trudged through the deep rain puddles, dragging his feet as he went. He was in a foul mood; a bad mood, really! His feelings matched the drabness and the dreariness of the morning. Just who did Becky think she was, telling him his heart was wicked? the red-haired boy wondered, sloshing his way down the street and venting his anger on the puddles and any available near-by object.

Kurly, the Patchett's cocker spaniel puppy, hearing Jeremy slish-sloshing past his open gate, rushed out eagerly to greet his little friend. But Jeremy ignored him; totally and completely and positively ignored the shiny-black, silken-furred, playful puppy.

Woof, woof, woof, Kurly barked, trying his very best to extract a smile (at least!) or a gentle 'good morning' kind of pat from his little friend. But it didn't work. No sir! Not this morning: Jeremy merely looked at the puppy. Then, raising his right foot, he let loose and kicked the little ball of shiny-black fur soundly.

Yip, yip! Kurly cried out in pain (and wounded pride) as he turned and ran back through the open gate into the safety and security of his own pretty yard as fast as his short legs would take him.

Yip, yip! he cried again, as Cynthia Patchett opened the door and scooped his trembling little body up into her arms.

"You bad, bad boy!" Cynthia scolded, seeing Jeremy, and knowing that he had kicked her little puppy. "You wicked, wicked boy! sloe added, hurrying inside the house.

Jeremy stopped dead-still in the very center of a big puddle. "Wicked boy," Cynthia had called him. "Wicked..." Why... why..., who did she think she was? he wondered, feeling suddenly like something was about to explode inside his chest. First Becky, and now Cynthia!

Turning quickly, Jeremy stuck his tongue out at the closed door. Maybe... just maybe... Cynthia was watching from inside and would see how he felt about her, he thought, clenching his fist inside the pocket of his rain coat.

A car raced by. Its tires threw mud and water on Jeremy's head and into his face and eyes. He looked like a mud baby, he was sure. His new raincoat--a sunny-bright yellow --was plastered with the dirty, gummy stuff. It wasn't pretty at all anymore. Why... why..., it looked ugly. Ugly! And horrid, too, he thought, turning quickly and starting homeward.

From behind a curtain at the living room window, Cynthia watched Jeremy. When he was in front of the gate, she hurried out to the porch. In a loud, shrill voice she cried, "You bad, bad

boy, Jeremy Blackwell! Hurting a harmless and innocent little puppy. You have a wicked heart," she added emphatically. "A very wicked heart!"

As quickly as Cynthia had appeared, she was gone. Jeremy heard the door close behind her and, stunned and shocked, he stood very, very still..., right in the center of another big rain puddle, too!

A salty tear moistened the corner of his eye, then another, and another. He didn't like being told that he was bad, he reasoned, but being told that he was wicked . . . well, that was just too much. Besides, he wasn't all that bad. The few little naughty things he did wouldn't matter!

Or would they! he wondered suddenly, remembering a Scripture verse he had learned in Sunday School: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Then there was the verse that told about the little foxes that spoiled the vines. They were only little foxes, his father had told him, but they did spoil the vines and do the harm. Could it be... could it be... perhaps..., that his heart was wicked, just like Becky and Cynthia had said? And... and..., what if Father and Mother were right, when they told him that God didn't have any 'little' sins; that all sin..., and any kind of sin..., was black and evil and exceeding wicked and would keep him out of Heaven, unless it was confessed and repented of and made right.

Jeremy swallowed. A big, hard lump popped right into the middle of his throat! And try as he may to swallow it, the nasty thing stayed just where it popped up--in the very center of his throat!

Suddenly the little boy was frightened. Suppose he died with all the many 'little foxes' of sin and sinful habits hidden away in the secret 'caves' and chambers of his heart? What then? He couldn't get into Heaven, he knew, because Heaven was a Holy place and no sin was allowed in it. Only those whose sins were forgiven, and those with pure and clean hearts, were allowed inside.

It was a sobering thought, and in that instant Jeremy knew what he must do.

Without turning to see if Cynthia was watching him, he ran down the street toward his home. He would get saved. Yes, he would! he decided, weeping brokenly. And he would get sanctified wholly, too. Never again would Becky and Cynthia tell him he was wicked. He would be all new, in Christ, and they would see the difference. Indeed they would! And they would know, too!

* * * * *

June, 1980

Story 3

MELLODIE'S LESSON

Mellodie drew the comb through her long, thick hair and put a barrette in each side to keep it out of her face, then she straightened the bed covers and hung her clothes on hangers inside the closet. A load, like a ton of bricks, was on her heart, threatening to keep her in tears all the time. She swallowed several times and brushed away the brazen tears that had dared to venture beyond her eyelids, before hurrying down the stair steps to the kitchen. Oh, if only Mother would get well! she thought. If only she could come home from the hospital!

"Good morning, Mellodie dear," Grandma Tracy called before Mellodie's feet landed on the last step even. "How's my little sweetheart?" Grandma asked quickly.

Mellodie swallowed, trying to rid herself of the big lump inside her throat. "I . . . I'm fine, Grandma, she stammered, adding a polite, "thank you."

"You rested well, I suppose," Grandma said, taking biscuits out of the oven,

Again Mellodie swallowed. How could she tell Grandma that she couldn't sleep well with Mother gone. And what if her mother never came home again!

The thought sent a sharp pain through Mellodie's heart. Her stomach felt funny and queer, like butterflies were flitting around inside it, and her eyes stung with sudden, unbidden tears. Turning quickly, lest Grandma see her crying, Mellodie rushed into the living room and buried her face in a sofa pillow.

First it was Father who got sick and had to go to the hospital; then it was her baby sister, Melissa, and now, Mother.

Suddenly Mellodie couldn't understand it. Not at all. The more she tried to understand why her father and mother and baby sister had suffered so, the less she was able to understand it. Was this all a part of God's plan for her parents' life she wondered quickly, thinking things far beyond her eight years. But Job had suffered, too, she recalled suddenly. O, how he suffered! Boils covered him from the top of his head to the very soles of his feet, the Bible declared. What's more, the dogs came and licked those sores. And Job was a righteous man, just like her dear father and mother were.

Sitting suddenly upright, Mellodie felt ashamed of herself for being so fearful. Hadn't the Lord promised that all things worked together for good to those who loved Him! And didn't God see where her mother was? And know how much pain she was suffering, too! Yes, He did! He saw, and He knew all the time. It was up to her to believe this and to trust Him to take care of her mother.

"Mellodie. Mellodie," Grandma called from the kitchen. "Breakfast is ready."

"Coming, Grandmother," the child replied, hurrying out of the living room.

"Aren't you feeling well?" Grandma asked with concern.

"I... I guess I just need to learn to trust God more, Grandma."

"Trust, Child?" Grandma queried, her deep-blue eyes probing the innocent face before her.

"Yes. You know, believe God even when I don't understand, and . . . and when I... I'm... worried."

Grandma's face took on a perplexed look; then just as quickly her expression changed. Hurrying to Mellodie, she folded her in her loving arms. "Why, Child," she said tenderly, "you're worrying about your mother, aren't you?"

Mellodie nodded; her eyes clouded over with unshed tears.

"I'm sorry, honey," Grandma apologized. "I should have taken more time with you and let some of the work go. Your mother's illness is serious but God is going to bring her through. You see, Mellodie, honey, I have full assurance of what I am saying: The Lord gave your daddy and me the same promise. At a different time, to be sure, but it was the same promise."

Mellodie's eyes brightened immediately. Bubbling over with relief, she cried happily, "Tell it to me, Grandma. Please. O do!"

Taking Mellodie's sweet, little, full round face in her hands and turning it upwards toward her own, Grandma said confidently, "Your mother will soon be home, honey. The Lord gave me Psalms 41:1-3. Here is what it says: 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in trouble.

"'The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.' "

Mellodie clapped her hands together for joy. "O Grandma," she exclaimed happily, "that's wonderful! Wonderful!"

"Indeed it is, little one; and while these precious promises are ours for the reading they're also ours for ,the claiming. For laying hold upon!

"You... you mean... I could get a . . . a promise, too?" Mellodie asked eagerly. "You certainly could."

"As... as little as I am? Really, Grandma?"

"Yes, dear, as little as you are. You See, no child is too little to come to Jesus for anything; or about anything. To be sure, Jesus wants you to come. He said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not' "

Mellodie's eyes were shining. Throwing her arms around Grandma's neck, she said, "I'll go right now and ask Jesus to give me a Promise, too. One all my own!" And skipping away, she

called over her shoulder, "O Grandma, it's so wonderful to know that Jesus wants me to trust Him!"

Brushing tears off her cheeks, Grandma put the plate of biscuits back in the still-warm oven. Breakfast could always wait, she reasoned. Especially when a special little girl was learning her first real lesson in faith and trust!

* * * * *

July, 1980

Story 4 SOUNDER

Billy raced across the field with glee and carefree unconcern, jumping over weeds and hurdling rocks with great ease and amazing speed. Sounder, his brown and white tail wagging fiercely in excitement, ran ahead, yipping happy little sounds.

They ran and ran until they came to the merry brook. Breathless from running, Billy dropped down on the soft, green, mossy carpet beneath an umbrella-shaped willow tree. He sighed tiredly and closed his eyes.

"Aren't you tired?" he asked Sounder, whose tail wagged back and forth as if to say, "Come on; keep going. There's much more to see and do."

"Sorry, Sounder," the boy said. "I'm going to rest awhile. Sit down and catch your breath."

But the dog had other ideas. Sniffing the ground carefully, Sounder circled the willow several times then ran wildly toward the nearby woods, barking fiercely.

"Sounder, Sounder! Come back!" Billy scolded, jumping to his feet and following the little dog. "Come back here!" he ordered loudly.

But Sounder didn't hear. Already his bark sounded far, far away.

Billy stopped and looked around him. "Soun--der!" he shouted again. "You come here this minute!"

Billy waited and waited but Sounder didn't return. What had gotten into his dog! He wondered as he kicked at a hollow log. The birds sang and twittered and chirped, and Billy, feeling lonely without the playful dog, hurried home.

"Something wrong?" his mother asked when he entered the kitchen. "That dog!" Billy exclaimed sullenly.

"What about Sounder? He's a good little dog."

"He was a good dog, Mother; not anymore! He went into the woods after something and wouldn't stay and play with me at all."

"He's only being natural," Mother commented. "He's a rabbit dog."

"He's not supposed to chase rabbits!" the boy declared firmly.

"He's supposed to play with me."

"When he was smaller, yes. But not anymore, Billy. Sounder's grown now, and he's only doing what comes natural for him, chasing rabbits. In many ways, this reminds me of your heart...."

Billy gasped. Mother knew about Kip's car then, he thought, feeling uncomfortable. God must have told her all about it, he felt sure.

"Jeremiah 17:9 says, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' "Mother said sadly, quoting the verse. "The reason you take trucks and cars and marbles is because you're doing what comes almost natural for you. But, oh, how this grieves Jesus . . . and Daddy and me!"

Billy swallowed hard.

"Kip came over this morning"

Kip? What did he want? Billy wondered, feeling frightened and miserable. Oh, why did he stick one of Kip's little match box cars in his pocket? Why?

Suddenly, Billy knew what made him do what he did. Tears clouded his eyes. Soon they were rolling down his cheeks like little streams.

"Mother," he cried brokenly, "I see what you mean. The reason I do these wicked and evil things is because Jesus isn't living in my heart. When the devil whispers, 'Take Kip's car, or truck or marbles,' I do it."

"That makes the devil your master then, doesn't it, Billy? And you are his servant and his slave."

The truth of Mother's statement sank deeply into Billy's young heart, filling him with fear.

"Jesus is such a loving Saviour!" Mother said, tenderly-soft. "He created your heart so He could live in it and fellowship with you. But my boy has never invited this Heavenly Guest to come into his heart and to forgive him for his many sins."

"O Mother, I want Him to come in! I do! I do!" Billy sobbed. "Please pray for me."

Kneeling by a kitchen chair, Mother and son prayed until Billy prayed clear through and through clear

With the tiny car held in his hand, Billy hurried to Kip's house.., to make restitution and confession. Never again would he steal, he thought happily. He had a new Master within his heart . . . the blessed Lord Jesus.

Singing happily, Billy rang Kip's doorbell.

* * * * *

August, 1980

Story 5-a
JUDGE NOT

Part 1

Trenton looked through the cracks in the hedge toward Joe's house less than an eighth of a mile away. How he did miss Joe! he thought. And the worst part of it all was that he simply couldn't figure out why his best friend wouldn't come over anymore --nor hardly speak to him when he went over to Joe's house.

It was perplexing, Trent thought. Why, they had been best friends for so long as he could remember, and always, they had celebrated each and every birthday together, too. And why not! They were born on the same day and were the same age. The only thing that made Joe a tiny, tiny bit older than he, was that Joe was born in the morning and his mother said that he, Trenton, was born early that same night.

Trent wiggled around on the bottom porch step to a position where he could look through the hedge cracks better and watch for Joe, but no movement whatever could he see. Perhaps it was just as well that Joe didn't come over, he mused silently, kicking at a stone on the ground, for he'd surely have to ask him about the piece of missing kite string and those missing Lego pieces, too. He knew he hadn't misplaced them; no sir. And he knew Jennifer hadn't taken them for she had been over to Grandma's house the day they suddenly disappeared; and tiny Barbara certainly couldn't have swallowed them and still be alive, Trent was sure.

Suddenly a thought popped into his head; he knew why Joe wasn't coming over anymore. Yes, he did! Joe was guilty. He had stolen the string and those Lego building pieces. That was all there was to it; Joe was guilty, and he

"Hey, Solomon!" Trenton exclaimed suddenly, as an owl settled quickly on his shoulder and interrupted his thoughts. "You scared me!" he added, looking sideways at the pet. "Isn't it a bit early for you to be playing tricks?" he asked. "You're supposed to be sleeping, like other owls do. Remember? Sleep in the day, feed and fellowship at night. You have your schedule all mixed up, old fellow."

The owl, a resident of Trent's folks since it was blown from its nest to the ground on a windy April night, had become one of the many family pets.

For many years, Trent's mother had had a sort of local "Animal Clinic." She seemed to know what to do and how, when animals or fowls became injured or maimed. The neighbors, knowing her gift of gentleness and healing to these creatures, brought their sick and ailing to her for care until they were once again well and restored to health.

Such was the case of Solomon who, utterly frustrated and frightened and abandoned by his parents, wheeped and huddled in a little heap beneath a tree as dogs mauled his cold, wet body. Hope of survival seemed small indeed as the little owlet was brought to the house by Cris and Joan Triggs, near neighbors.

Trent remembered how Jennifer and his parents and he had taken turns at holding the arrogant and angry little fellow, who tried to bite and claw them. It was the pinch of raw hamburger that finally calmed the owlet down and he began to eat. His bed had been an empty rabbit cage put into the garage with fresh straw in it. After a second day of proper feeding and loving care, the little fellow, wide-eyed and all-wise looking and studying the family carefully, was dubbed Solomon by Trenton and Jennifer.

He had grown and thrived until one day he was able to fly, and that's when he abandoned the rabbit cage for one of the tall sweet gum trees around the barn. Here it was that he roosted and slept, high in the branches of the tree.

"Quit pecking my ear!" Trenton said aloud now, reaching up and lifting the saucy bird off his shoulder, "You peck hard, Solomon. Hard! Why aren't you sleeping?" he asked as he set the owl on one of his knees and stroked its silky, thickly-feathered head.

Solomon cocked his head this way, then that way. His great, round piercing eyes looked intently into Trenton's face and from somewhere deep inside his throat he uttered strange little 'scolding' sounds.

"Don't scold me for asking you a perfectly sensible question!" Trenton said, laughing aloud. "After all, you really ought to be sleeping. It's not time for supper; not yet. Now Midnight... well..., he should be up and about, because he's a crow. But you . . . you should be asleep, Solomon. You're going to be all tuckered out tonight when you go hunting for mice and"

"Caw. Caw. Caw!" came a loud call from overhead, and just as Trenton raised his eyes, Midnight landed on his dark brown hair.

"Hey, you!" Trent exclaimed. "Get off my head! That's my property!"

But Midnight continued 'Caw, caw, caw-ing' and standing contentedly on the very center of Trent's head.

"Honestly, you birds!" the boy said, reaching up and lifting the pet crow off his head and perching him on his other knee. "Did you hear me mention your name to Solomon? Huh? And I thought you were over in the oak tree. Whew! I must learn to be more careful! You hear everything, you and Solomon, don't you?"

The owl made another strange little throat sound and Midnight gave a softly-contented "Caw, caw" call.

"I guess you even know by now that Joe took the Lego building pieces I had here on the porch. And my kite string, too. Well, I'm certainly glad you can't talk; you'd hurry over to Joe's house and tell him. I know you would. But... Hey, Midnight! That's Jennifer's balloon you took! Come back! Come back!" Trenton shouted, jumping to his feet and racing after the pet crow.

But Midnight was soon high in the sky and in no time at all he had disappeared somewhere among the tall trees.

(Now what, Boys and Girls? See Part 2 next month, Lord Willing.)

* * * * *

September, 1980

Story 5-b
JUDGE NOT

Part 2

Long after Midnight had flown away, Trenton stared up into the tall trees, exclaiming, "How about that! about that! How about that! Taking an innocent girl's balloon and doing a disappearing act with it! And that silly old crow doesn't even know how to blow up a balloon. Now how about that!"

Solomon, thoroughly disgruntled and deflated over having been dumped off Trent's knee, showed his disgust and utter disdain by wobbling away and pouting before taking to the air and hiding in a nearby tree.

Just as Trenton started into the house Jennifer came around the corner. Her long brown hair was flying in the breeze and her words tumbled out in excited phrases.

"Trent! Trent!" she called loudly. "My hair ribbon! It . . . it's gone! Midnight zoomed down out of the popular tree and landed on my head and.., and yanked the ribbon right out of my hair." Trent's mouth flew open wide. "He... he... pecked at Barbara's barrette, too, but it wouldn't come out. But he nearly scared her to death."

"Is that why she was crying in the sand box? Trenton asked, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Yes; and I'd like to spank that naughty crow and teach him some lessons. Maybe you and I don't mind that he flies on our head, but Barbara's a little baby; she's scared. Didn't you hear her scream?"

"'Course I did, Jennifer. But I just thought she got sand in her eyes; or that Mr. Mac's cocker spaniel came across the fields and paid her a visit again."

Jennifer laughed. "Well, Buffy really likes us," she said, "even if Barbara's scared of her. I wonder why she's afraid of Buffy. She's a good little dog."

Trent was silent for a while, then he said, "Morn said you and I were scared of dogs, too, when we were as little as Barbara is. It's a sort of 'stage' we all go through, Mother said. Now you take Sheba; well"

Jennifer laughed; she gave her brother a knowing look. "I know what you mean, she said suddenly. "I remember when I wouldn't even let Sheba near me. But she's a nice dog."

"And a good ball player!" Trent added emphatically. "Why, she's a super ball catcher, and an excellent out-fielder, too. If it wasn't for Sheba I'd have to run after every ball I hit when you won't play ball with me."

"I think it's much nicer to play with dolls and pretend I'm baking and cooking," Jennifer said, sitting down on the porch step. "You need to get Joe and Cris over to play ball." Getting quickly to her feet, and putting her hands on her hips, Jennifer said, "Say, what's wrong with Joe? He hasn't been over for a long, long time."

A lump popped into Trent's throat. A big lump.

"I . . . I don't know what to think," he told his sister frankly and honestly. "I . . . I really don't! Joe was my best friend, and"

"You mean he isn't your best friend anymore, Trent?" Jennifer's great, dark eyes looked rounder, bigger and more intense than ever as she asked the question.

Trenton twiddled with a twig he had in his hand. His tennis shoe dug a deep trough in the dust along the sidewalk. "I... I'm not sure, Jen," he said. "I'm just not sure of anything anymore. There's been so much happening; so many weird things, until I... well... I... I'm not sure I can even trust Joe anymore."

Jennifer stood like a statue, deathly still and shocked. Had she heard Trenton rightly? Had she? Why, Joe and Trent were 'bosom' buddies, like Jonathan and David in the Bible.

"Don't look so sad," Trent told his sister. "I . . . I feel like crying, too. But that doesn't change the fact that Joe hardly speaks to me when I go over there. And it doesn't change the fact that, right after Joe left here last Wednesday, my kite string disappeared. So did a big bunch of lego pieces, too."

"Oh-h!" Jennifer caught her breath in, quick-like. "Oh, Trent!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You . . . you mustn't think such things. You and Joe have been closest friends."

"Well, answer me one thing, Jennifer. Did you take my piece of kite string?"

"No, of course not. I didn't even see your kite string."

"OK. Now, did you take those logo pieces that were here on the porch last Wednesday when Joe was over and we were building a helicopter out of them?"

" 'Course I didn't, Trent."

"Then who did take them?" Trenton asked quickly. "I ran off the porch to chase a butterfly and Joe said he had to go home. When I got back from the garden--where I sat and watched the butterfly for a long time--and tried to finish the helicopter, most of the pieces were gone. ' "

Jennifer stared into space. Her great, round, dark eyes were pools of study and thought.

"Who did it," Trent asked, "if Joe didn't?"

Jennifer opened her mouth and when she spoke it was with great earnestness. "I don't know who did it, Trent; but I do know that it wasn't Joe. He's a real Christian."

"I know he is. I . . . I mean, I thought he was."

"Thought he was! Why, Trenton Daniel, you know he is! Joe wouldn't do such a thing; and it... it's wrong to judge."

"I know it's wrong, Jennifer. And I . . . I try not to think of such things. But... Hey, look! It's Joe!" Trent exclaimed to his sister as his eye caught the figure of his friend running across the field toward their house.

(See Chapter 3 next month, Boys and Girls)

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October, 1980

Story 5-c
JUDGE NOT

Part 3

Racing across the yard, Trenton hurried toward the fast approaching neighbor boy.

"Joe! Joe! he exclaimed, overjoyed at seeing his best friend again. "What's wrong?"

"What happened? What happened?" Jennifer asked, finally catching up with her brother.

"Come with me!" the panting, nearly-breathless neighbor boy said excitedly. "Hurry!" he added quickly.

"Wait till we ask Mother," Trent said, rushing back to the house and getting permission for Jennifer and himself to go with Joe.

"Whatever has happened?" Trenton asked, looking Joe full in the face.

"Wait and see!" was all Joe said between gasping to get his breath. "It's a real shocker! An eye-opener, as Dad often says."

"But what can it be?" Jennifer asked, half-running, half-stumbling to keep up with the boys.

"Just wait," Joe said kindly, calling across his shoulder as he and Trent hurried ahead.

Joe led the way through the meadow (where a flock of his father's sheep grazed in utter contentment and peace) to the orchard and on to the back-forty field. A woods joined hard against the big field and as Joe and Trent and Jennifer came near the corner of the field a crow swooped low over their heads.

"Caw, caw, caw," the crow scolded. "Caw. Caw. Caw."

"It . . . it's Midnight!" Jennifer exclaimed, looking up at the noisy creature. "Come here, Midnight. Here, Black Lady," she coaxed.

"Caw. Caw. Caw," the crow scolded loudly and noisily, settling on Jennifer's head and pecking her soundly.

"Why, Midnight! You naughty, naughty bird!" Jennifer exclaimed, brushing the crow off her head. I need to teach you some manners; some do's and don'ts. You... you ... didn't get permission to sit on top of my head, and"

"Caw. Caw. Caw. Caw." The crow flapped her wings. "Go away; go away," she seemed to be saying.

"Look up into that pine tree," Joe told his friends.

Shielding his eyes from the sun with his hands, Trent looked upward. Then he gasped "Joe!" he said dumbfounded. "Joe! I... I... why I can hardly believe it! Jennifer's hair ribbon's in that tree. Her . . . her balloon, too. In Midnight's nest! I see them dangling."

"Come over here, Trent and I'll show you something else," Joe said, leading Trent to the other side of the tree. Pointing at a bright object, he said, "See that bit of red?" Trenton looked and looked

"It's not too far from that bright, bright red thing you see shining through the nest. See it?" Joe asked, pointing with his finger.

"Hey, I do! I see it!" Trent said loudly.

"I do too," Jennifer echoed. "What is it?"

"That," Joe said, "is the piece of rubber I was using to finish making my sling shot. It disappeared, and .. and... Trent, I... I blamed you for taking it. I want you to forgive me for ever thinking such an evil thought."

Trent swallowed; tears glimmered and shimmered in his big, dark brown eyes. Then he said quickly, "Oh, Joe, forgive me. I... I thought you took my bit of kite string and all those missing lego pieces. But I see I was mistaken: Midnight's been the thief all along. Look at that nest, would you! Lego pieces, strips of rubber, a hair ribbon, sticks, kite strings, a balloon"

"And we'll see what else is up there!" Joe's father said, coming along the edge of the woods with his pickup truck and unloading a ladder.

"How'd you know we were back here?" Trenton asked Joe's father.

"Joe told me he followed Midnight today when he saw her take lengths of my binder twine and fly away with it. He discovered her nest and ran home to tell me the news. I told him I'd bring a ladder and we'd see just what that naughty girl has stolen from all of us."

"Oh, but Mr. Howell," Jennifer began, "you're not going to destroy Midnight's nest! She... she's"

Mr. Howell laughed pleasantly. "No, indeed, Jennifer; Midnight shall have her nest. But I'm curious to see just what that bird has woven into her nest besides those things we can see. I tell you, Solomon and Midnight really know how to make things disappear."

"Solomon!" Trent and Jennifer exclaimed together. "Solomon!"

"Yes, Solomon, too. He took one of my wife's garden gloves one day.

She was spraying plants and didn't want the spray to get on her hands. Well, she laid the glove down long enough to do something else and when she went to get it Solomon swooped down and grabbed it then flew away with it. We haven't seen it since."

"Solomon! How about that!" Trent exclaimed, watching Mr. Howell climb the ladder.

"Caw. Caw. Caw. Caw!" Midnight shouted, swooping low and pecking Joe's father on his hat.
"Caw! Caw!"

"Just be patient, Midnight," Mr. Howell said softly to the crow. "I'm only wanting to see what you have in this nest. Hm-m!" he exclaimed.

"A lot of lego building pieces, a small length of chain from someone's tool shed, a piece of shiny glass, a..."

"Joe," Trent said softly, touching his friend on the shoulder, "this has taught me a lesson."
"Me, too!" the other exclaimed.

"By God's grace and His help, I'll be more careful after this before I accuse anyone of taking my things. Like Jennifer said, it's wrong to judge another Just look how wrong I was!"

"Well, you weren't any more wrong than I was," Joe said humbly. "And I'm sorry, Trent"
"So am I, Joe. Forgive me."

" 'Course you're forgiven, Trent. You know, the next time something comes up missing I'm going to take it to the Lord in prayer. Nothing's going to break up our friendship; not ever again."

"Caw. Caw. Caw," Midnight scolded as Mr. Howell climbed down the ladder. Turning and looking up into the tree, Jennifer said, "You poor, poor crow. Don't you know legos aren't soft to sit on! I'll have to teach you some lessons. You poor thing!"

"Caw. Caw. Caw," was all Midnight said as she began a thorough inspection of her nest.

* * * * *

November, 1980

Story 6

THANKFULNESS

The screened in porch door slammed shut with a loud bang, and Terry, pulling the snow-covered boots fiercely off his feet, sulked moodily through the fragrantly pie-scented kitchen and started upstairs.

"What's wrong with him?" Emilie exclaimed, as she finished crimping the edge of another pie shell and pushed it toward her mother for adding the deliciously-light lemon sponge pie filling.

"I'm sure I don't know," Mrs. Cart answered. "But one thing is certain; we don't allow anyone to slam doors around our house. Terry," she called, "come here without delay."

Knowing better than to disobey, the boy hurried to the kitchen.

"Now," Mrs. Cart told her son, "you will go out on the porch and close the door quietly, then you will come here and tell me what's troubling you; why you slammed the door in the first place."

Terry closed the door so quietly that, had Emilie not been watching her nine year old brother, she would not have known that he had opened the door even.

"And now, Terry, you must tell me what happened," his mother told him as she slid the filled pies into the oven for baking.

Terry's eyes looked fierce. He stood with his shoulders thrown back and his body straight and erect, like a soldier getting ready for marching orders.

"Well?" Mrs. Carr queried, looking her son in his deep blue eyes.

Under the questioning, penetrating gaze of his mother, Terry's soldier-like shoulders suddenly sagged and drooped. "It . . . it's Cory . . . again!" he blurted emphatically.

"What about Cory?" Mrs. Cart probed gently, kindly.

In a great gush, the story came out.

"He... he's so proud that I... I ... can't stand him! He jumped all over me, said we were poor. Poor! Just 'cause we can't have a big baked ham like they're having for Thanksgiving. I wanted to hit him."

"Terry, you didn't?" Emilie cried out, knowing her brother's quick temper.

"Course I didn't hit him..., actually. But in my heart, I did! And he'd deserve it if I would have done it outwardly, Emilie. Why, the fellows all hate him. Brag, brag, brag! That's all he does."

Mrs. Cart sighed. "Terry," she said, placing a hand on his shoulder, "this matter of us being poor: it depends on how one looks at things. Why Son, we're rich. Extremely rich! O, not in money and material things, perhaps . . . although in these, even, we have what our Heavenly Father promised us: all needs supplied. But we are abundantly rich, possessing all things in Christ. And we have love and happiness in our home. These are only a few of the things that no amount of money can buy."

"And we have a mother and father who stay home with us," Emilie added. "Something Cory can't say!"

"Please, children!" Mrs. Carr replied. "Cory can't help this. In fact, I'm sure Cory is a very lonesome little boy. Terry, I want you to invite him home for supper the day after Thanksgiving."

"But, Morn, I... I can't! The boys avoid him like . . . like the . . . plague."

"So much the more reason why you must not avoid him. Cory is crying out for a friend. We will be his friends, and soon Cory will appreciate real riches . . . eternal riches. I want you to call him on the telephone.., now.., and apologize for anything and everything you said that was unkind and hateful, then you invite him here, like I told you to do. Next in line is a prayer meeting, Terry dear. Jesus won't live in a heart that is filled with hatred. So that means you'll have to be forgiven, and after you're forgiven we're going to pray--and continue praying--unt!l you are wholly sanctified. You U be a different boy. Cory will notice it, too!"

Mumbling and grumbling to himself--beneath his breath, to be sure!--Terry headed for the telephone. When he had apologized and hung up, Mrs. Carr asked, "What did Cory say when you invited him to supper? Will he come?"

"He'll be here," was the quick reply. A tone of utter disgust registered in Terry's voice. "But I'll be without boy friends; no one likes Cory," he lamented.

"That's where you're wrong, Terry: Jesus loves Cory. Every bit as much as He loves you and all the other boys and girls. So you see, Cory does have Someone who likes him. And now for that prayer meeting, dear boy. But first, you'll have to have a beginning, so this means you must ask for forgiveness

A long time afterward, as Terry sat in his bedroom reading the Bible, he rejoiced in his soul. Not only did he know he was saved.., forgiven of every committed sin.., but he also knew and experienced the deeper work called Holiness of heart, or entire sanctification. Now, for the first time in his life, he loved Cory. Actually loved him! And, too, he felt truly thankful to God for the many, many blessings which were his.

Thanksgiving Day was only three-fourths of the way over when a voice called to Terry as he played with his cousins in the newly-fallen snow.

"May I play with you, please?" Cory asked, watching as the group built a snow fort.

"Oh, do, Cory! Do!" the boys all answered merrily. "We'd love to have you." And without further ado, Cory became a part of the happy group.

It was almost dark when Cory drew Terry aside. "I... I'm sorry I talked to you like I did," he began softly. "I said you were poor. But Terry, you.., you re rich! You have so many things I... I want.., but which I don't have." And Cory made a circle in the snow with his boot.

Terry's heart felt sad for the boy. At last he said, "The Lord's been good to me, Cory: I have a Christian father and mother, and a wonderful sister, too"

"You and your folks are always so happy," the boy exclaimed, interrupting. "This is one reason I think you're rich; and you always have friends, and"

"You have friends, too, Cory," Terry said happily. "We're all your friends."

The boy's face brightened immediately. "You. . . I mean., well... you'll be my 'forever' friend, Terry? Not just over Thanksgiving?" The words almost tumbled out.

Terry's eyes filled with tears. From the very bottom of his all-new heart, he said, "I'm your real friend now and I'll be your real friend forever and ever."

Cory heaved a great sigh of relief. "Know what? he said quickly. "This has been the happiest Thanksgiving Day of my life; I have a friend! Well, I must get home. Bye, Terry. I'll see you tomorrow."

Terry watched till Cory disappeared from view, then he joined his cousins again.

"What was that all about?" one of them asked. "Why the secrecy?"

Terry smiled. Then he said, "It had to do with riches. We're rich; and I didn't realize it until Mother told me about it. And now Cory reminded me of it. What's more, Cory'll soon be experiencing the joys of eternal riches in Christ, too. He's coming for supper tomorrow night, the Lord willing."

The cousins smiled. They were sure Cory's day of spiritual Thanksgiving was only hours away.

* * * * *

December, 1980

Story 7

THE CHRISTMAS PART

Ginny paced back and forth across the living room carpet. Her dark eyes wore a troubled look deep in their inner recesses. She shouldn't have done it, her heart told her; but she just couldn't help herself, it seemed. Why, that Christmas part was made for her. She just knew it was.

Going quickly to the bathroom, she surveyed herself in the mirror: Long, silken, wheat-colored hair; soft skin, fair complexion; great dark eyes that were such a contrast to her other features as to make her look almost angelic and heavenly, she thought, giving her head a vain little toss before going back to the living room and picking the papers up from where she had tossed them on the sofa.

"I will learn this part!" she declared stubbornly to no one but to Muffin the cat. "I'll learn it; and I will be the angel, see if I'm not!"

Muffin stretched his big, furry body. Then, in seeming disgust, he curled up on the hearth-rug in front of the fireplace and with his head tucked snugly between his legs, he was soon fast asleep.

"So you're not interested in what I have to say, huh?" Ginny said, poking the big ball of yellow fur until Muffin unwound himself and fled away to a corner in the kitchen.

Watching (with apparent satisfaction) until Muffin had disappeared, Ginny walked to the picture window and stared out at the beautiful falling snow. Her lips moved silently as she tried to learn the part Mrs. Summers had given her (reluctantly) only yesterday in school.

Try as she may, Ginny's tongue seemed to get all twisted up and all tangled when she tried to say the part. Worse still, her mind refused to grasp the words and to hold them for long. It seemed she just couldn't think; that she had forgotten entirely and completely how to go about memorizing anything..., especially so, anything Scriptural.

"Why? Why?" she asked herself, giving the papers a toss and sending them rattling across the floor as Mary Ann's tear-stained face popped before her.

"Stop haunting me!" Ginny exclaimed aloud, angrily, rushing upstairs and trying to forget the look on Mary Ann's face when she told her she'd make a horrid looking angel.

'You... you just can't take that part, Mary Ann!' she had told her classmate after Mrs. Summers told Mary Ann to look it over, that she wanted her to be the angel.

'Just look at your face!' Ginny remembered having said. 'It's scarred and...'

That's when Mary Ann rushed up to Mrs. Summers and told her she couldn't possibly take the part; that Ginny would make the perfect angel

And she had gotten the part, too. Yes, she did; even if Mrs. Summers didn't look one bit pleased when she handed it to her. And now that she had it, well, something wasn't right

Ginny walked to the window and looked out. Kevin and Kersten Waldow were having a big time on their sled. Perhaps if she thought hard enough about the fun they were having Mary Ann's sad, tearstained face wouldn't haunt her anymore, she thought. But try as she would to forget, the face remained before her.

Muffin, having sneaked up the stairs behind Ginny, stuck his furry head cautiously and warily around the corner of the door and peeked inside. The dark scowl on the little girl's face told his little cat brain that it wasn't safe for him to stay near her and, having received the brain-message, he scampered quickly away, making sure that he was safely hidden and well out of reach from any kicking feet.

"Ginny. Ginny" It was mother's voice. "Come down here immediately and pick these papers up. You know better than to toss things carelessly on the floor."

In a foul mood, Ginny hurried downstairs, knowing better than to disobey or linger when an order was issued and given from either of her parents.

"Now," her mother said, when Ginny's feet landed on the bottom step, "maybe you can tell me what this is all about. Look at these papers! What happened? Tell me!"

With down-cast eyes, Ginny began, "I... I hate the part! I... I wanted it and.., and now I hate it. I wish I hadn't told Mary Ann that she'd make a horrid looking angel ... with... with those scars... on her face!"

"You said that to Mary Ann, Ginny? Oh, how could you! That's cruel! Cruel! Especially since she got those scars when she rescued her baby sister from their burning house. After the firemen and everyone else had given up hope of saving the baby, Mary Ann rushed into the house when no one noticed and rescued her baby sister--the beautiful Evangeline."

"Mother! No! No! Oh, I'm sorry! Sorry! I . . . I didn't know that!"

Ginny cried, covering her face with her hands. "O my heart is so sinful and wicked! Please, Mother, pray for me. I... I'm not beautiful at all. Mary Ann is; she has a beautiful spirit and a... a... holy heart, too. I'm hateful and mean and sinful and proud. But I know Jesus can save me!"

" 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' " Mother quoted, as Ginny led out in earnest prayer. An hour later, a snow-covered, radiant-faced Ginny knocked on Mary Ann's door. Mary Ann herself opened the door. "Ginny!" she exclaimed. "Do come inside." Throwing her arms around Mary Ann's neck and thrusting the part into her hand, Ginny said, "Forgive me for saying what I said to you about the scars on your face, Mary Ann. I'm sorry. Oh, so sorry! You're beautiful. Really beautiful; and you must take the part. I called Mrs. Summers and told her everything and"

"No, Ginny. No. I can't!"

"Yes, you can, Mary Ann, and you must. You see, it's only proper and right that you should have the part: Jesus came to earth to give His life for the sins of the world and.., and you ... sacrificed terribly to... to save Evangeline. Mother told me about it, Mary Ann. My best and dearest Friend has scars, too"

"Wh . . . what do you mean, Ginny?"

With tears trickling down her cheeks, Ginny said, "I have a new heart, Mary Ann. I got saved a little while ago. My Friend held out His hands to me; there were scars in them. Nail scars. They're beautiful hands, Mary Ann; like your face."

Mary Ann's eyes were shining. Not because of the school Christmas part but because her prayer was answered and Ginny had a changed heart.

* * * * *

THE END