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## **CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1988**

**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

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### CONTENTS

Story 1  
LORI'S NEW YEAR

Story 2-a  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-b  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-c  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-d  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-e  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-f  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 2-g  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Story 3  
JERRY LEE'S FRIEND

Story 4  
OBEDIENCE IS BETTER

Story 5  
THE THANKSGIVING PIE

Story 6  
CHRISTMAS ANGELS

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Story 1  
LORI'S NEW YEAR

"I wish you wouldn't be picking on me all the time," Jori said, in her tiny-little, sweetly-soft voice to her twin, Lori. "It seems I can't do anything anymore to suit you. And this makes me so sad. For you, Lori."

Lori spun around so fast that she almost fell over backwards. "I don't see why it should make you sad!" she exclaimed with a hint of indignation and agitation.

"Because I love you," Jori answered, simply and honestly. "We used to have such good times together," she added sadly.

"Oh, forget it, Jori!" her twin called, rushing down the hallway. "If you..., if you..., if you..."

Jori heard a door slam and knew that Lori had gone into the little bedroom they shared. Tears danced from her eyes. Ever since she had felt Jesus speak to her heart and she had been saved at Mother's knees, Lori was spiteful and mean and hateful to her. She couldn't understand what was wrong with her sister and why she acted the way she did. She loved Lori so much. Oh, she did. She did! And she wanted Lori to love her, too; the way she used to love her.

She stood inside the window and watched the naked branches of the trees catching snowflakes as they fell. But her heart wasn't satisfied to watch the pretty, white snow as it fell: she wanted Lori to watch it with her, the way they used to do together.

She brushed the tears away from her eyes and walked down the hallway toward the bedroom. Folding her dainty little hands together tightly, she looked up toward heaven. Jesus was up there, she knew. But better still, He was in her heart. Yes, He was. She knew this. "Dear Jesus,"

she prayed, "please help Lori. I don't know what's wrong with her. But whatever it is, dear Jesus, please change her. Save Lori; come into her heart."

She wiped the tears away once more then turned the knob ever so quietly and stood in the doorway. "Lori," she said softly, "I love you. I wish you'd come to the window with me and watch the snow. Did you know it's snowing?" she asked.

For a long time Lori didn't answer. She just sat in her little rocking chair looking at her tiny hands.

"I love you, Lori. I wish you'd come and watch the snow as it covers the trees and the lawn. It looks so very pretty and clean and white. It's like what Jesus did to my heart when He took my sins away."

Lori lifted eyes now that sparkled with tears. "O Jori," she cried, "I want to be like you are. I do! I do! Over and over, again and again, I said I was going to be sweet and kind and loving like you..., resolutions, or some such thing, I think grown people call them. But I can't do it. They don't work. Not at all."

"Maybe those resolutions don't work," Jori said tearfully, "But I know that when Jesus comes into your heart you'll be kind and loving and sweet, Lori, Jesus makes you to be this way. I guess it's just that, well, you can't be any other way than to be kind because Jesus is kind. So, when He lives inside your heart, you become like what He is."

"Oh Jori, that's what I want. I've been so mean and..., and nasty and . . . and ugly to you until I'm ashamed of myself. I... I... Jori, forgive me. I was ugly to you because ... because... I was jealous of you." And by now, Lori was sobbing bitter tears of repentance and sorrow for her sin.

"Well, Jesus will save you if you want Him to," Jori explained, patting Lori lovingly on her bowed head.

"Oh, I do want Him to save me, Jori. I do! I want to be sweet and loving and kind like you are. But, do you think Jesus will want to save me after how nasty I have been toward you? Maybe He won't want to, Jori."

"Did you forget the story Mother told us of the little naughty sheep that always wandered away from the other sheep?" Jori asked.

"And away from the kind and loving shepherd?" Lori asked eagerly.

"Yes, that's the one. Why, Lori, don't you remember Mother saying how the shepherd loved that naughty sheep so much that he left all of the good sheep to go out looking for the naughty, runaway sheep? And he never did come back until he found it. Then he was very, very happy. And he placed it, sick and bleeding, Mother said, right next to where he slept and ate, and he never gave up until it was well and strong again. And that naughty little sheep never walked away from the fold again, but stayed always near to the good shepherd who loved him."

"I... I remember, Jori. And now, while I kneel and pray, will you ask Jesus to save me and to heal me, like that other good shepherd did for his naughty little sheep? Jesus can make me good. Pray for me, Jori. I want to start this new year with Jesus in my heart."

Jori knelt beside the little rocking chair and prayed, and before very long, Lori, like the naughty little sheep in Mother's story, was in the Good Shepherd's fold; the fold where Jesus was the Heavenly Shepherd. Oh, how happy and peaceful and light the little girl felt. She knew her sins were all taken away and were forgiven.

Come, Jori dear, she said, putting her arm around her twin, "let's go tell Mother I'm in God's shepherd fold. Then let's watch the snow falling..., together."

Jori was wondrously happy. She knew that now she and Lori were indeed identical twins. With arms around each other, they hurried out of the bedroom to tell Mother the good news.

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February 1988

Story 2-a  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 1

Keith walked down the dark hallway on tiptoe, carefully "testing" each step he took, afraid the floor would squeak or crack beneath his feet. He liked the big old house they had just moved into, but oh, how he disliked the squeaks, creaks, and noises of the house. It reminded him somewhat of Aunt Hettie, whose aching arthritic joints cracked and seemed to groan when she moved and, especially, when she walked.

He took another step. A board cracked loudly beneath his feet. He stopped and stood dead-still in his tracks, expecting, at any moment, to hear the door to his parents' bedroom open. He'd have time to escape back to the security of his room if it did, for their door squeaked something dreadfully.

His heart hammered loudly inside his chest while he waited, but no sound came from the bedroom. He breathed a sigh of great relief. Then, very carefully, he tiptoed down the hallway toward the stair steps. He would surprise his father by his bravery, he decided.

The moon was big and full and round. It was beautiful. And when he reached the first step, the silvery rays of moonlight, coming through the curtains at a nearby window, lighted his pathway downward. He was so excited that it caused his heart to do crazy, funny little flip-flops. From the day he moved into the house, with his parents and his sister Trish, he planned for this night: He had wanted to go down by the merry-sounding, laughing, gurgling stream on a moonlit night and now, at last, he was going to fulfill that desire. Alone!

He remembered reading how very courageous and brave the Indian boys were, and how they were taught to have no fear of the darkness. So, tonight, even though he was not an Indian boy, he was going to test and prove his own bravery. Yes, indeed. He was every bit as brave as those fearless boys about whom he had read. Maybe, even, more brave; he had Jesus living in his heart and this meant that Jesus was with him all the time and, therefore, he knew he had nothing to fear. God had made the darkness too, hadn't He? He recalled hearing his father reading this from the Book of Genesis in their daily family devotions one morning. God made the stars, too. And He saw that it was good. Even the darkness! Keith was so excited with the thought of his venture that he stubbed his toe on a table leg at the bottom of the stairs. For a while, he danced around the floor on one foot, holding and nursing the painful, throbbing toe. Tears ran down his ruddy cheeks. Brave Indian boys don't cry .... Resolutely and determinedly, he took his hand and brushed the tears away. Gritting his teeth, he stopped dancing around and slipped into his tennis shoes.

He winced with pain when he stood up and walked through the dining room to the kitchen. But after a while the pain and the throbbing didn't hurt as bad. He was thankful for this. He stopped by the refrigerator and took the carefully wrapped peanut butter and jelly sandwich from inside its cold walls where he had placed it before going upstairs; then, sticking a big apple in the bag beside the sandwich, and getting a flashlight out of the deep kitchen drawer, Keith slipped quietly out the door.

He stood for a while on the big, roomy porch that went all the way around the house except at the back; he wanted to get used to the darkness before he started for the stream which, even now, he could hear laughing and murmuring in the distance. He guessed what he was really hearing was the water as it spilled over the rocks at the upper falls. Oh, how very lovely and inviting it sounded!

He strapped the flashlight around his waist, trod the sandwich in a plastic bag to his belt, then stepped off the porch, feeling big and wonderfully brave. The moon made a silvery-white path for him as he crossed the wide expanse of lawn and headed for the meadows which, right now wore thick, lush green carpets of verdant green and were tucked securely into the brown, clean-smelling earth with myriads of buttercups and tiny, pale blue forget-me-nots. The bees loved the meadows surrounding their big old house as much as he did, he was sure: He had sat down in the lush greenery and watched as the little workers gathered honey from the flower-covered plants.

Keith looked back toward the house from the meadow, where his feet sank deliciously into the thick, lush green grass carpet. The house looked like a great white giant with sleeping eyes. There was ever so much for him to explore yet inside its tall walls, he thought with keen excitement. But, for tonight, he must visit his "friend," the merry stream.

Every night since they had moved into the big house, the little stream had seemed to beckon him to its side. It was when the noise and the laughter and the chatter of the day had ceased and given way to the silence of a sleeping household that Keith, slipping quietly from his bed and kneeling in front of the south window in his room, had listened. And heard. The stream's

cheerfully-pleasant song floated to him on the soft night breezes and, from the first time he had heard it and listened to its soothing melody, he was captured.

A soft, warm breeze ruffled his sandy, wheat-colored hair and set the grasses beneath his feet to dancing. Oh, it was wonderful being outside on a bright moonlit night with only the sky overhead for a roof and tiny, twinkling, happy-looking stars dancing like crystal chandeliers in the blue.

Keith sighed happily. He knew now how David, the shepherd boy of the Psalms, must have felt as he watched and cared for his father's sheep by night. It was a wonderful feeling, he was sure, for he, himself, was experiencing the feeling of a closeness to God right now. And, suddenly, Keith forgot about Indian braves; he would be brave like David. Brave, and ever trust in God. Just like David!

(See Chapter 2)

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March 1988

Story 2-b  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 2

Keith dropped down on the grass and looked up into the sky. How beautiful the sky was. How very beautiful! he thought. Then he laid down on his back and for a long while he watched the dancing, twinkling, blinking stars. A shooting star, loosed from its moorings, made a dazzling sight on its fiery journey earthward and almost as quickly as he had seen it, it was gone; burned out on its rapid descent downward.

The boy gasped in awe. Never had he seen anything so dramatically awesome. But there were ever so many wonders for one to see, feel, and explore in the country, he thought, happy and thankful beyond words that his dear father had bought the old house with its acres and acres of land and forest, away from the noise and hustle and bustle of the city, out in the country.

He counted the days since he arrived here, five in all, and, for him, each new day was as beautiful and as wonderful as the day before, full of awe and adventure and wonder and amazement. Why, there were so many acres of land and of forest for him to explore that he wondered if he'd ever get around to seeing it all; if he lived to be an old man even. It was all so very exciting.

He jumped to his feet, quickly, remembering that he had started out to pay a moonlight visit to his special little "friend," the stream. Stars were jewels to watch and to behold, but his real mission tonight was the stream, with its merry song and happy gurgle.

The meadows smelled clean and deliciously fragrant of grasses and flowers and, save for an occasional trill of a night bird's softly-sweet song and the low hum of insects, the night was peacefully still and silent. The boy felt a very special closeness to God, and to David the shepherd boy.

He came to the laughing stream. It meandered and wound through his father's lower meadow on its journey from the upper falls to the river, many miles away. Keith gasped at its beauty: It looked like a great, fast-moving silver ribbon tonight. The moonbeams danced and sparkled and glistened like diamonds on its surface.

"You... you're beautiful by moonlight!" he exclaimed as he stooped down to chase a moonbeam. "You're even more beautiful than when I saw you that second day, after we got here," he declared. "The moon dressed you up in your very finest," he added. "Why, just look at you; you're shining and sparkling like you have jewels spilled all around you and over you. Oh, I love you so very, very much, little stream. And I love your song, too, and your merry-sounding laughter. What a lot of world you get to see as you run toward the river!"

The stream seemed to sing its merry tune even louder, Keith thought, as he sat down, cross-legged, on its cool, cool bank. He wanted to watch and to feel the wonder of this night. He would store the memory of it away in his mind so that he would never, never forget its glory and beauty. Not ever. Even if he lived to be a hundred or more years old.

He took his tennis shoes off and dangled his feet in the water. How very cold it felt! But good. It sure wakened a fellow up. He wondered how many beautiful rainbow trout were swimming near his wiggling toes or passing by them. The stream had plenty of the delicious species, he had heard his father say. He knew that, just as soon as his father was all "settled in," the two of them would go fishing together, God willing. His dad was not only his beloved and much-loved father but he was his best friend, as well. They did ever so many things together. Many things. It always made Keith feel grown-up, doing things together with his dad.

A cloud scudded across the path of the moon, darkening the sky for a brief moment; still the merry stream sang and gurgled, running around stones and over others. No cloud, regardless of how black and dark or evil looking, would ever silence its song. It sang if there was sunshine or rain or clouds. Always. Constantly, it sang. Oh how much he wanted to be like the little stream--for Jesus. Happy all the time, and singing even when things didn't go right and when everything seemed to be all wrong around him.

Keith was so happy and so blest in his soul that tears of joy danced from his sky-blue eyes and ran merrily down his cheeks, already sun-tanned and looking ruddy and healthy from the five days of living in the beautiful country and its magnificent surroundings. He was ever so thankful that he had given his heart to Jesus and that he belonged to Him, body, soul, mind, strength and spirit. Salvation and sanctification were not only for grown-ups, but for boys and girls, too. Yes, for boys like himself!

He heard the rushing, gushing sound of the water from the upper falls as it cascaded over the rocks and, feeling brave and unafraid, he got to his feet, put his tennis shoes on and headed

upward, toward the falls. His father and he had done many wonderful things together by night and, in a sense, everything seemed more wonderful and more beautiful by night than by day. He must see the falls by night. By a moonlit night, especially. Then, some day, when his father was less busy and not so occupied with getting adjusted to his new job, he would tell him of this night visit and, together, they would come to the falls, the Lord willing.

Keith looked toward the falls, somewhere near the edge of the forest. It would be dark there, he knew. But he had to see the falls by moonlight, he decided, feeling quite venturesome and unafraid. The God who had "His way in the storm," as the Bible stated, was also having His way in the darkness. Better still, the Bible said that God neither slumbered nor slept. So He was watching ... carefully..., over a boy named Keith!

He headed bravely toward the loud-sounding, rushing, gushing water.

(See Chapter 3)

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April 1988

Story 2-c  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 3

Keith stepped into the forest and stood for a while, looking around him. It was considerably darker in the forest than out in the open meadows and for a brief moment the boy debated in his mind if he should go any further or not. But he was too close to his destination to turn back; the falls were just ahead. He couldn't think of not seeing them by moonlight. He would be sorry if he didn't, he knew.

He cast a quick glance back toward the sprawling meadows, then he plunged deeper into the forest toward the falls. The noise of the rushing water became almost a loud roar now as he neared the falls and again he wondered if he should go on. But the thought of being able to tell his dear father, in the morning, of his lone but exciting and wonderful venture gave speed to the boy's footsteps and soon he found himself standing near the falls. So near, in fact, that the water from the high falls sprayed over his head and his body in a fine, cool mist.

He closed his eyes and lifted his head, the way he had seen the ducks do in the rain, and let the cool spray, mist wet his hair and trickle down over his cheeks. How very refreshing it felt. Oh, this was wonderful. Wonderful!

Keith remembered the flashlight then. Quickly he walked away from the mist and, opening the plastic bag containing the peanut butter-jelly sandwich, he put the flashlight inside, sealing the zip-loc bag tightly. He might need the light; moisture would damage it. His father had taught him

ever so many necessary and worthwhile things; things which he needed to know. He had so many things for which to be thankful, he thought, stepping closer to the falls again.

He walked beside the falls; first one side of them, then the other. How cool the air was here! It was God's great outdoor air conditioner, he decided, lifting his head, expecting, almost, to see God, or some of the holy angels. Heaven seemed close to earth here, the boy thought, feeling sure that he was experiencing some of the beautiful nighttime adventures that David experienced and felt while out on those hills guarding and tending his father's sheep. Why, David even killed a lion and a bear.

This remembrance sent-chills of fear racing up and down Keith's spine. He had a sudden urge to run for all he was worth until he was safe in the green meadows. There were very few shadows out in those big, open meadows. Here, in the forest, shadows danced around him everywhere. The trees with their leaf dresses made all kinds of shadows. But could shadows hurt anyone? he asked himself. Were they ever known to harm one? Of course not, he told his heart. Shadows were totally and completely harmless in themselves. So why should he be afraid and run when he had nothing to fear?

The thought calmed his heart and gave peace to his heaving chest. David didn't run every time some little thing frightened him. No indeed. He became a part of the beautiful star-lit, moon-bright nights. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who neither slumbered nor slept, kept a watchful eye upon the earthly shepherd boy and protected him from all harm; even from the paw of the bear and the mouth of the lion. He was watching him, Keith, too, this very minute[ The Bible said that God's angel would "encamp" round about them that feared Him, and He would deliver them. Well, he feared God, this was a for-sure thing. He loved the Lord.

Keith looked upward to the falls. Oh, how good God was, to have allowed them to live right "next door" to something so awesomely beautiful and lovely as the stream and the mighty waterfalls! He felt almost like he was living in a dream world. But he knew he wasn't; this was real. Very much so. He was, this very moment, looking at the shimmering, glittering water falls. The moonbeams danced upon the water spray and played hide-and-go-seek among the leaves. It was all real, and not a dream at all, and it was one of the most lovely sights he had ever seen. He could scarcely wait to tell his father and then to have him see for himself just how beautiful it looked by moonlight.

He walked beside the falls, far enough away so he was not drenched by the mighty downpour of water but close enough to feel the gentle mist spray cooling his body. Tall ferns grew in abundance on the forest floor. Keith noticed their fragrance. It was unlike anything he had ever smelled. He liked it, different though the odor was. It seemed to be "becoming" to the ferns, and to the forest, too; kind of like it belonged there.

He parted the ferns and, in the moonlit shadows, walked until he felt very little spray anymore. He must have walked away from the falls, he thought, looking upward. Where was the big, round, silvery-yellow moon? he wondered. It was dark now. Where was he? He could hear the roaring of the spilling, falling, rushing, gushing water but he could not see any sign of the moon.

He walked toward where he saw a shimmer of light among the trees and suddenly he felt himself falling, down, down, down. It felt as though the earth beneath his feet had suddenly dropped away. Fear gripped his heart and wrapped him in its dreadful garment. "Oh, God, help me!" he cried out loud. "Please, help the!"

(See Chapter 4)

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May 1988

Story 2-d  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 4

Keith landed on a mound of dirt and leaves, or at least he thought it felt like that was what it was. In spite of his resolve to be brave, he felt tears running down his cheeks. He was afraid! He couldn't deny this. Not now. Oh, whatever would happen to him? What if his dear parents never found him! He . . . he'd starve to death; die of hunger and of thirst. His parents would never know what happened to him. So near to home, he thought, but yet so far!

He wanted to scream for help but he knew the rushing, roaring falls would drown out his voice. Too, his father had told him on one of their nights camping out together to never w panic to conquer him. "Panicking gets you nowhere, Keith," his father had said, in that soft sounding voice so becoming to him and to his gentle nature. "One can't think when he screams and becomes panicky. Stay calm talk to the Lord, and let Him make a way through for you, my son. After all, He knows where you are and what is happening to you. So don't panic; not under any circumstances: trust in the Lord, and He will deliver you and help you."

Over and over, Keith thought of his father's good advice, as they were lying side by side in sleeping bags that night. It was easy to stay calm and to be unafraid when his father was so very near to him and was holding his hand, he thought now, He wasn't afraid then; not at all: he knew his dear father would protect him and take care of him. But now, alone in the dark dungeon, or whatever it was, he discovered that he wasn't as brave as he had thought he was, or wanted to be. Again, he felt the hot tears wash his face.

"Please, Jesus, help me," he cried out. "I.. I'm scared. Terribly so. And... and I see now that I should not have come out alone in the dark with.., without telling Father and Mother. I didn't mean to be wicked, dear Jesus; You know I didn't. There's no wickedness in my heart since you cleansed it and sanctified me wholly. O Jesus, I was so foolish! I'm sorry I came. Please, in my foolishness, help me. Draw close to me and.., and wrap Your arms around me the way Father and Mother do when I'm frightened...."

As surely as he knew his name and his age, so certainly and surely Keith knew the Lord had heard and answered his simple but from-the-heart prayer; he felt God's mighty presence

surround him and fold him in His love. God was with him in this hole, or dungeon, or whatever it was. And, in spite of his foolishness in venturing out alone in the darkness, he knew the Lord was going to protect him and get him home again. He had the sweet, calm assurance in his heart.

He thought of the flashlight then and, quickly, he opened the zip-loc bag and took the light out. Never in all his natural life did he appreciate a light more than he did now. He hugged it to his chest, so thankful for its light was he. When he pushed the button and the bright light came on he flashed the light around him, wanting to see, as much as was possible, just where he was and what he had fallen into. He saw great, strong, tall looking walls. They were everywhere he looked, except when he directed the beam of light up from where he had fallen. There he saw a hole large enough for two or three men to fall through together.

By now, Keith was fascinated. All kinds of interesting things ran through his mind. Was the hole a man-made hole or was it formed naturally by God's powerful hand? he wondered, as the light's beam showed him that it was straight up and down; no gradual decline here. Too, he saw by the beam of the light that not only were there walls around him but he was in a great room; an earth "room." It was cool and damp and smelled earthy indeed, and if his dear father had been here with him Keith knew this discovery would have been unusually delightful and exciting, as well.

He flashed the light up the hole through which he had fallen and a pair of shiny-bright eyes were caught in its beam. A bear! he thought, feeling all frozen up with fear. Or a... a wild cat! He and his father had studied about the various animals that abounded in the forests of this, their new state to which they had moved, and both wild cats and bear were among those listed.

With a hammering, pounding heart Keith dropped to his knees and cried out to God for help and for protection. He was defenseless; positively so. His only protection and help was in God; the God who shut the lions' mouths for Daniel and the God who walked in the burning, fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and delivered them completely.

He was still praying and crying and calling upon the Lord when he heard a happy, friendly, well-known bark. Rags! the bark belonged to Rags! He'd know that anywhere.

He flashed the light upward while he brushed the tears off his face. "Rags!" he exclaimed, overjoyed. "Rags! Dear, dear Rags! Where did you come from? How did you get loose?" Frantic with joy, the dog continued looking down into the hole, walking carefully around its edges and barking almost incessantly.

Keith flashed the light up and down the length of the hole through which he had fallen, searching for a way to get up, and out. He spied what was once a sturdy rope ladder and, taking hold of it, testing it for soundness and strength, his spirits soared with hope. But a few "steps" up, the long-ago built and now-rotted ladder gave way and Keith dropped down onto the cool earth floor again.

"Rags," he called, "run home and waken Father. Bring Father."

For a long while the dog continued pacing and barking around the hole, wanting to reach his little master.

"Rags," Keith said, "listen to me. Be quiet, Pal...."

The barking ceased.

"Good. Good, Rags," Keith complimented. "Run home, dear Rags, and awaken Father. Bring Father, Rags. Go!"

As if he were a child instead of a dog, the faithful Rags darted away obediently into the dark.

(See Chapter 5)

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June 1988

Story 2-e

THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 5

Keith felt lonely after Rags left the opening. It was almost too much for him to imagine, how the dog came to be there. Rags was tied up securely out at his own little red dog house. Keith's father had said that until Rags became accustomed to his new surroundings and the new territory, the dog should be tied. And he had been tied, this the boy knew. Yet, here he had been, standing big as a wild animal, looking down into the hole where his master was a captive. Jesus had heard his plea and his cry for help and, sure as his name was Keith, God had seen to it that Rags got loose. The dog had been sent by God, of this he was sure.

Keith lifted his head upward and thanked the Lord for sending Rags. Then he thanked Him for the dog's obedience. Before Rags had become his very own special dog a rich lady had owned him and, being wealthy, she had sent Rags to an obedience school for dogs. It was at this school that the dog had learned many lessons in obedience, among them the lesson in taking orders and carrying those orders out to the minutest detail. This was why, when Keith had told him to go and get his father, Rags had obeyed immediately and left for the house.

The thought that Rags would manage, somehow, to get his father's attention was a consoling thought to Keith. It might be some time before either of them arrived at the falls but he knew they would come. Yes, they would! He had prayed, and he believed God. They would come!

He turned the flashlight's beam toward the "walls" again and was surprised to see that he was in a tunnel. At least he thought it was a tunnel; it certainly looked like one. Again, he wondered if it was a natural tunnel or whether it was man-made. If it was man-made, why was it

made? For what purpose? There had to be a purpose if it was, this he knew. With the beam of the light held in front of him, Keith walked farther into the tunnel, hoping to find something that would give him a clue as to the purpose or intent for which the tunnel was made. But the light was too limited for doing much exploring and, besides, he felt safer staying near to the hole through which he had dropped. It would be ever so easy to get "swallowed up" in the tunnel, which led to he didn't know where.

Tunnels were a shortcut through mountains, or obstacles, he had heard their preacher say some time or other. Was this tunnel a shortcut? If so, where did it lead to, and where did it come out at? And, too, why was the short-cut needed? If it was anything needed in any way for the public use, certainly it would not have been hidden behind roaring waterfalls. Nor would it have had a hole in the ground with a rope ladder leading down its sheer side. No indeed! This was not an ordinary tunnel, the boy was sure. It had a secret mission. But what?

He found a place near the hole and sat down. He was tired of standing. The falls' roar was muffled, but Keith knew the water was spilling over the huge gray-white rocks the same as it did before he fell through the opening. Oh, how he wished he hadn't left the safety and the security of the house! If only he hadn't been so venturesome! Why, he would have been sleeping soundly in his own bed this very hour if he hadn't come out into the night.

Well, he had learned a lesson; sitting inside a dark tunnel, alone, in the night was anything but pleasant. He should have waited until his dear father could have come with him. He had so many wonderful memories of trips the two of them had taken together to the woods and the open fields and of camping out together, too.

Keith felt his eyelids drooping with sleep. He got to his feet and, opening the zip-loc bag, he took the peanut butter and jelly sandwich out and began eating it. He must not fall asleep in case Rags and his father came.

A smile pulled at the corners of the boy's mouth when he thought about dear Rags and how his name had come to be what it was now. The dog had had a long, funny sounding, very dignified sort of name, one which he, Keith, could not remember. Besides that, it was French and, try as he might, he never could pronounce it properly. So one day, in desperation, he had called, simply, "Rags," and the dog came bounding to him like that had always been his name. From then on, it was always, without any fanfare or pretense at class, Rags. Simply, and down to earth, plain old Rags. His father had said that he believed the dog was as pleased with the change of names as his nine-year-old son was.

Keith sat down again and finished the sandwich. Then he remembered that he had forgotten to thank the Lord for the delicious peanut butterjelly and bread, so he bowed his head and offered his thanks when it had disappeared. Then sleep finally overcame him.

(See Chapter 6)

\* \* \* \* \*

July 1988

Story 2-f  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 6

Keith was suddenly awakened by cramps in his legs. His neck felt stiff and crooked, too, from failing asleep in his awkward sitting position. He remembered, suddenly, where he was and how he had come to be in the tunnel, which was totally pitch dark.

He groped in the darkness for the flashlight and finally, after feeling on the earth-floor around him for a long time, he located the light, which must have rolled off his knees as he slept. Was it broken? he wondered, hoping with all that was within him that it was not. How horrible and dreadful a place must hell be! he thought, as he sat in total and complete darkness; a darkness so heavy and so real that he could feel it, he was sure. And the Bible, in speaking about the "wicked and unprofitable servant," had said that he was cast into "outer darkness," where there was "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

"O God!" Keith prayed earnestly. Please help me to always stay true and faithful to Thee; and don't ever, never, let me go back on Thee and lose my soul in hell. This darkness down here is so dreadfully thick and frightening that I don't ever want to be cast into that horrible 'outer darkness.' Please, kind Jesus, please, help the flashlight to turn on... the push button just won't push..., and send Rags back with Father, soon. I'm going to thank You for hearing my prayer and for answering it, too. Your Word says we must believe, whenever we come to You and ask anything in Your name. I am believing, this very minute, that the flashlight will work and that Father and Rags will be here in just a little while. So I'll say thank You, Jesus, for these answers now."

Keith put his thumb on the button and pushed and, instantly, the bright shaft of light chased the heavy darkness away from around him. Oh, what a beautiful thing light was! It made even gloomy, dark and dismal places look better and..., and almost, even, pretty.

Tears of thankfulness and gratefulness sprang to Keith's eyes. Jesus was Light. He said He was. Yes, He did! He said He was the Light of the world. And wherever Jesus was, the darkness disappeared and was pushed away. He said He was Light, and in Him was no darkness at all. So, since Jesus was the Light of the world, and since there was no darkness at all in Him, that meant that whenever Jesus was around, and wherever He was, there was nothing but light. Beautiful, beautiful light. Oh, how comforting was the thought to his boyish heart.

A loud bark from the edge of the hole sent a cheery "Hello" from Keith. He jumped up and down for joy. Rags was back. Dear, faithful Rags! But where was Father? he wondered. Had Rags not been able to awaken his parent?

"Rags!" he cried happily. "Rags! Where's Father? Couldn't you get him awake?"

The dog danced around the rim of the hole, barking for all he was worth.

"It's OK, Rags," Keith shouted up ward. "I'm so glad you're here. Even if you didn't bring Father I'm happy you're here."

"What do you mean by 'even if you didn't bring Father'? I'm here, dear boy. What happened to you? Why did you go out alone? And how did you happen to get down there?"

"Oh, Father, I'm so happy you're here that I believe I'm going to cry," Keith called from the deep, dark hole "I... I'm sorry I came out alone tonight. I... I wanted to see the creek by moonlight; and when I heard the falls, I knew I'd have to see them too. And... and Father, I... I fell into this hole."

"Flash your light up here, Keith, please. I'll have a better idea how far you are down."

Keith obeyed, saying, "There's a big tunnel down here I looked for some way to get up out of the hole and I found a rope ladder leading up. But it broke when I had climbed only a few rungs up. It's rotted, Dad. All rotted."

"Well, now, that's interesting, Keith. Tell you what, I'm coming down to you. When Rags began leading me towards the forest, I decided to go back to the house and get a bigger, better lantern-light and a long length of rope and a few other necessary things. I found a few edibles, too, which I decided we might enjoy while we're in the exploring mood, you and I."

"You... you won't punish me for . . . for coming out alone?" Keith called up from the hole, utterly ecstatic with happiness.

"Why should I, son? I saw you leave. I guess I understand you: I was like you, when I was your age; always exploring and out among God's great, beautiful outdoors. I didn't think you'd venture up to the falls, though. Now catch this rope that I'm sending down to you. I have it anchored securely and tightly to a monster of a rock up here. And now, out of my way, Son, I'm coming down to you. Rags and I. Anchors away!"

Keith stepped back into the tunnel, and not a moment too soon; in the next minute his father's arms were around him and Rags was licking his hands fiercely. "Thank God, you're safe!" his father exclaimed joyously. "Now hold my hand and together we'll explore this tunnel, my boy. Tunnels lead to something, or somewhere. I'm as eager and as excited as you are to see where this leads to."

With the big, bright lantern-light searching out each nook and cranny and shoving the darkness into far corners, the trio started out through the tunnel, the father "feeding" the rope out as he walked.

(See Chapter 7 for finish)

\* \* \* \* \*

August 1988

Story 2-g  
THE DARK TUNNEL

Chapter 7

"Father, where were you when I left the house?" Keith asked. "You said you saw me leave...."

"I did, dear boy. I had come downstairs to pray. In fact I was praying quietly when I heard your footsteps on the squeaky stair steps. And I was still praying when Rags came to the door and set up a horrible howl. I didn't want him to waken your mother and your sister so I let him inside. But he gave me no rest until I followed him. Had you taken him with you, Keith?"

"No, I didn't. God got him loose. I don't know how, but I know God did it. You see, I prayed for the Lord to send help to me and He sent Rags."

"Well praise the Lord, Son. That's just like Jesus; always waiting to answer our prayers! Now look what I found; a pair of old shoes. So old, in fact, that they're green with mildew from the dampness down here. And here's a pair of men's trousers,"

"Oh, Father, look! Look! This room is ever so full of old clothing; little dresses, big dresses, small trousers, big, big trousers. What were they used for, do you suppose? And why so very many of them? There are shawls and bonnets and shoes and hats and...and, well, just everything and anything that anybody would need to dress up in. Oh, look! Here's a wig. And here's another one. Oh, there's ever so many of them on this pile. Come, look!"

"In just a little while, Keith. I'm examining these old muskets over here."

"Muskets! Muskets, Dad! Why, that means that these things are old, Father."

"Yes, my son. Very, very old. If each item could talk, I'm sure it would have enough to say so that a small history book could be written about each. And if these silent reminders of the past are what I think they are..., what their purpose was for being here, I mean... I could weep. Truth of the matter is, Keith, I feel we are on sacred ground. Martyr's ground, even."

"What do you mean? Why do you say that?" Keith asked, lifting a tiny baby's garment made out of a rough, coarse cloth. "Wouldn't this have made the baby itchy!" he exclaimed as he examined the tiny little thing. "There's even a shawl and a bonnet to match. We've discovered what Mother calls heirlooms, Dad. I do believe we have."

"We've discovered the 'ghostly' remains of an era where slaves were beaten mercilessly by cruel masters; some of them killed, even. And, if my guess is right, these garments . . . wigs, shawls, clothing and all..., were the clothing used to disguise the slaves and to help make their

escape possible. This tunnel was their dressing room, their hideaway, and their exit, finally, to freedom."

"Really? Do you think so, Dad?" "I'm positive of it, Keith. In their own silent way, these things are telling us it's so. See the alcove leading off this 'room' into that one over there?" and Keith's father focused the light into another 'storage' room. "That kept the food stuffs; imperishables, of course. The slaves needed food to sustain them on their flight to freedom. That room served as the pantry, I'm sure. See the 'shelves' cut into the tunnel's sides? A perfect pantry."

"Oh, Dad, this is sad. But exciting, too. I wonder where the tunnel comes out at."

"I brought plenty of rope along, Son. We'll soon find out. Come, let's go. We'll come back here again, the Lord willing. Many times. I think we've discovered some things that a museum might be interested in."

Rags ran ahead, wagging his tail the way he always did when he was really and truly excited. After a long while, they came to a Y, one tunnel went left and the other one went right.

"We'll take the right tunnel for this time," Keith's father said. "Then we'll take the one that goes to the left. After we back-track, that is."

"I'm not one bit sleepy anymore, Dad. Let's go. This is the most exciting thing you and I have ever done together."

"You are right, my boy. I guess I'm as excited as you are. I guess I still have a lot of the little boy in me."

They walked for some distance and finally came to a dead end.

"I think there's a trap door, or some such thing, around here somewhere, if we can only find it. There must be some way in and out of this part of the tunnel, Keith."

"Over here, Dad. I'm sure this is it. Shine the light here. Doesn't this look like it may have been a door?" And Keith pointed to what looked like the outline of a door.

"It is a door, son. This was well concealed. But time and years have revealed its once-hidden and well-concealed identity. Now, let's give it a heave and see what happens. OK! Ready?" And with a heavy push, the door squeaked open.

"This is really something!" Keith exclaimed, following his father down a long, narrow, musty smelling passageway to five steps that led upward, where there was a sort of alcove and a door that pushed upward from the ground.

With another strong and forceful push, the door opened and the pair walked out., into the cellar of their very own house!

"Oh, Father," Keith said, "we live in a house that is full of history! I think I'll call our home 'Freedom House.' Isn't it wonderful! Some kind people risked their lives that those poor, dear slaves could be free from slavery and brutality and bondage. And that's what Jesus did for me: He not only risked His life but He gave it, that I might be free from sin. Say, I wonder why we didn't see this door when we came down here."

"It's been cleverly designed and equally cleverly camouflaged, Son. See here. We're in what was once a coal or potato bin. See how perfectly fitted everything is when the door is lowered? Only, I won't lower it all the way, until we are back into the a passageway again. You do want to find out where the other tunnel comes out, don't you, Keith? Rags is anxious to go, I can see that."

"Oh, yes, Father. Yes! Let's go!" Stepping down the steps, and with the door closed tightly behind them, they headed for the Y and for the tunnel going to the left. It led, they discovered, to the outside world through a cave on the other side of the mountain. And, for many, it led to freedom.

Tired, but excited over the discovery of the tunnels and their silent story, the father, son, and the dog made their way homeward. They would find out who those noble and brave homeowners were who jeopardized their lives for freedom of others, the father promised Keith.

As he crawled between the sheets on his bed, Jesus' words rang like a melody in his head, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love built the tunnels. Wonderful love. Fearless love.

In spite of the excitement of the wonderful discoveries, Keith was soon fast asleep.

The End

\* \* \* \* \*

September 1988

Story 3

JERRY LEE'S FRIEND

"Who-WhoWho-Who-" the hoot owl called from the big oak tree outside Jerry Lee's bedroom window. Jerry Lee snuggled farther down between the clean, crisp sheets on his bed and covered his ears with a pillow. He wanted to drown out the sound. The owl's loud call disturbed him. It made him feel uncomfortable.

"Who-Who-Who-Who-o." The call was even louder this time, it seemed.

"Be quiet!" Jerry Lee demanded, lifting his head out from under the sheet and the pillow. "You're not my friend at all anymore; you're my enemy."

"Who-Who-Who-Who-oo-o-o," answered the owl, clearly and wisely, seeming to linger long on the vowel O.

Jerry Lee wasn't happy with wise old Mr. Owl, no indeed. Not one tiny bit. Always, he had considered Mr. Owl his friend. One of his very best friends, in fact. He had listened each and every night for Mr. Owl's visit to the tall, stout oak tree. Until tonight, that is. Tonight, Mr. Owl's loud voice wasn't welcome and, in a way, this disturbed the boy.

He rolled over on his side and pushed his head down against the pillow, muffling the sound from the ear pressed tightly against the pillow. Then, again, he covered the other ear with a second pillow. Still Mr. Owl's question of "Who-Who-Who-Who-oo" reached all the way through the pillow's softness to his ears, only this time Jerry Lee was sure the wise old bird was saying, "You-You-You-You-u-u. You-You-You-You-u-u."

Oh, what could he do? What? He felt like he wanted to run, run, run. Away. So far away, in fact, that he'd never, never, not ever again, hear the call of his once-loved night friend, Mr. Owl. But he was scared of the dark; afraid of going outside, even, when it was dark. So he couldn't run away. No, he couldn't do that. Mr. Owl wasn't afraid of the dark. No indeed! On the contrary, he loved the dark and the night. That was the wise old bird's favorite time of day. He did all his hunting then. But then, Jerry Lee reasoned, maybe he wouldn't be afraid of the dark either if he had eyes and ears like the big old bird had: his eyes were made for the dark, by his great Creator God.

For a while, Jerry Lee heard nothing more from Mr. Owl and he felt it was safe to uncover his ear and roll over on his back so he could go to sleep. He liked sleeping on his back, for that way both his ears could hear the wonderful sounds coming from the great, big, beautiful outdoors; the song of the crickets, the cicadas and the katydids in late summer, and the sound of the night birds trilling out their sadly-sweet notes to the trees, the moon, the stars, and to whatever was within listening distance of their beautiful song.

He put the extra pillow in its place near his head and just began to relax when Mr. Owl let out a big, loud, noisy call close to his open window: "Who-Who-You-You-u-u; Who-Who-Who-Who-o-o; You-You-You-You- U-U."

Jerry Lee sat straight up in bed. He was scared. Really scared. Wise old Owl was not only asking Who, he was answering the question as well. "Who? You-u-u...!" Who could have told the old bird? he wondered, feeling guilty and wicked and unclean inside.

Oh, it was just no need trying to hide his sinful deed any longer, he thought, as he tossed the top sheet back and jumped out of bed and ran down the hallway as fast as his little feet could take him to his father and mother's bedroom.

"Is that you, Jerry Lee?" his mother asked sleepily, raising her head slightly off the pillow and trying hard to see what it was that had awakened her.

"Ye... yes," came the broken, sobbing reply. "I... I've been a very wicked boy, Mother," he confessed, as he ran over to the bed and into her open, waiting arms. "I... I made Whitey break his leg."

"Are you sure, honey?" Mother asked, now wide awake and sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Yes, I'm sure. I chased him around and around in the calf pen until he stumbled on the pile of rocks at the far end and... and broke his dear little wobbly leg. Oh Mother, I'm sorry I lied to you and Father and told you I didn't do anything to Whitey. I d/d make him break his leg. Forgive me. Please! Wise old Owl knew about it all the time: He hooted it to me and at me from the oak tree tonight. Mother, I feel all wicked and mean inside. Please pray with me. I want Jesus to forgive me and to come into my heart and make me new, and like Him."

And a little while later, Jerry Lee went back to bed knowing that he was forgiven. His sins were all washed away through Jesus' precious blood. Oh, he was so very happy.

"Now, Mr. Owl," he said, kneeling by the open window, "you may hoot all you want to. I don't care. I confessed it to Mother and Father and to God, and He has forgiven me."

"Who-Who-Who-Who-" answered the owl.

"Now you're my friend again," the little boy whispered through the screen. "Thanks for being so honest with me. Good night, Mr. Owl. I can go to sleep now; my conscience isn't bothering me anymore. Good night."

"Who-Who-Who-Who-" Mr. Owl replied again.

\* \* \* \* \*

October 1988

Story 4

OBEDIENCE IS BETTER

Kara snuggled up closer to the pillow on her bed. Leaning her head in the palm of her hand, she opened the book to chapter four. She left off reading there when Mother called her to come into the kitchen to wash dishes. And she was just getting into the exciting part of the story, too.

"Kara," her mother had said, "as soon as you are finished with the dishes I want you to dust, and straighten up all the bedrooms. And you vacuum the carpets, too. You are now eleven years old, and you're healthy and strong, so get busy, honey. Do a good job and you won't have to do it over again. I expect your very best. I'll be gone most of the day, helping your grandmother Grosley. Father's busy out in the shop. If you need him, he's as close as your call. Also, if you are finished by the time I get home, and if you've done your work well, there's a surprise waiting for you. I love you. I'm depending on you, Kara. Good-bye now. I mustn't keep Grandma wondering

where I am nor why I'm not there. It makes her worry and I don't want that." And with those words, Kara's mother was gone.

The house was still and silent after her mother left. It somehow felt empty, too, Kara noticed. So, in obedience to her mother, she washed and dried the dishes and put each one in its proper place inside the cupboard. Then, with the dust cloth and the polish in her hands, she hurried upstairs and dusted all the furniture in her parents' room and also in her three older brothers' rooms.

She was half-way through dusting in her room when she spied the book in the chair, where she had left it when her mother called her. The temptation was too great; the desire to know what, where, when, and why was too strong. She picked the book up and peeked at the page where she had left off reading. First one page, then another, and another. Soon she forgot about her work and about her mother's orders. The book absorbed her every minute and her every thought.

"Hey Kara, where are you?" her fourteen-year-old brother called up the stairway. "Are you finished with your work? You better hurry."

Kara mumbled that she wasn't finished but said it wouldn't take her long, then she continued reading.

The sun was sailing across the blue sky toward the west; her father came in from his shop next to the house and got cleaned up. Looking in on Kara, he asked if she had finished her work.

"Not quite all the way," Kara answered, turning to the next page in the book. She must find out what Aunt Britt had in the old trunk in the attic, and why she told Marla the trunk had a secret beneath its old lid and its rusty hinges. Oh, she must! If only she wasn't bothered so with such pesky questions! Kara thought.

"Get your work done, Kara. You can read when it's finished," her father told her as he paused in her doorway on his way downstairs.

Kara jumped off the bed and grabbed the dust cloth. With one hand, she dusted; with the other, she held the book. She finished dusting, then sat down on the floor and leaned her back against the foot of the bed and continued reading. She was surprised when she heard her mother's voice.

"You're not finished," her mother said sadly. "Oh, Kara, when will you learn to obey? According to Hebrews 2:2, 'Every... disobedience received a just recompense of reward,' so I shall have to punish you accordingly. First, put your book down. Now look at me, honey. I hate to do this, but you must be punished, and you must be taught to obey. Had you done your work like you were told to do, you would, this minute, be going with your father and your brothers to the caves. They have been waiting for you. But you cannot go."

"Oh, Mother, please! I do so want to go. I'll hurry, I promise. I'm sorry."

"You won't be going, Kara. I'm sorry. Your work is not finished, like you were ordered, kindly, to do. No, honey, you will not be going. I'm very sorry about this. For, you see, your father and I planned this as a big surprise for you children. We know how eager you were to see the caves. Now finish your work, every bit of it, while I go downstairs and tell Father to go, that you won't be coming. It would have meant spending the night in one of the cabins surrounding the caves and, then, in the morning, actually going to the caves. Now get busy, while I kiss Daddy and the boys good-bye."

Kara heard Mother's feet hurrying down the stairs. She felt like her heart would burst, so full of wanting to go was in its depths. "Oh, Jesus, forgive me, please," she cried, as she pushed the vacuum cleaner over the carpet. "I was disobedient, Jesus; dreadfully so. And I'm sorry. Forgive me. Please. I know the Bible says I am to obey my parents. I deserve this punishment, dear Jesus. And though I won't get to go to the caves, I'll be happy, Jesus, just knowing You've forgiven me of this great wickedness. Disobedience is sin; I bring it to You for forgiveness...."

Kara learned a lesson. She learned it well. Jesus did forgive her. But she paid for not having obeyed. And, always afterward, she obeyed.

\* \* \* \* \*

November 1988

Story 5

#### THE THANKSGIVING PIE

It was the day before Thanksgiving. Heather was so happy that she went skipping and flitting through the house like a bright and busy butterfly going from one pretty flower to another. "Oh, Christopher," she said to her cousin, who had come with his parents to be with Heather's parents for the day of Thanksgiving, "I am ever so happy you could come this year. It was most lonesome without you last year. Shall we go down into the basement to play or would you rather go outside and make a snow man?"

Christopher thought for a while, then he said, "Let's play in the basement this morning and outdoors after dinner. I love the snow, but I want to see if I can still play Chinese checkers. You're sure good at checkers, Heather. Let's go; I'll race you down the steps." And away the pair ran, almost falling over each other.

Once down in the basement, Christopher saw some old reading books. "Oh, I believe I'll read for a while," he said. "I always did like these old books your mother keeps down here."

"So do I!" Heather exclaimed. "Mother said each story has a... a moral, or some such thing, to it, whatever that means."

"I think it means there's something good in the story."

"You mean, like a... a lesson for us, Christopher?"

"Well, I guess maybe that's what it may be. But I'm not sure about it. I think, though, that I'm right. We'll have to ask when we go upstairs."

They sat down and read for a long while, then Christopher got to his feet, saying, "I'm ready for Chinese checkers, Heather."

"Oh, good, Christopher. I want to teach you how to win, only I'm not sure I'll be a good teacher because I don't know exactly how to teach. But I'll try. You'll have to learn to think while you play."

"Think? What do you mean? You just move those marbles around so you can jump the other person's marbles."

"But it's the thinking part that really helps you to see where to move your marbles, Christopher. See?" and Heather showed her cousin where he could move his marble so he could jump three of hers.

"You're sure kind," Christopher said, as Heather helped him.

"Jesus wants us to be kind. And Jesus makes us kind when He lives in our heart," the little girl replied.

Christopher was silent for a while. Then, quite suddenly, he said, "Um! Pies! I didn't know they were down here. Let's eat some."

"Oh, no, Christopher! Mother baked those for our Thanksgiving dinner. She put them on the table down here because she didn't have room for them upstairs. No, we must not touch those pies."

Christopher was now standing by the table where the pies were. "Um- m! Pumpkin!" he exclaimed. "And pecan and cherry and ...."

"Come, Christopher," Heather cried. "You must run from temptation. The Bible says so." "I'll show you what I m going to do," the boy said, pulling a pumpkin pie over to the side of the table and, with his hands, trying to lift up the crust holding the beautiful pumpkin filling. "Urn-m!" he exclaimed, licking his fingers as the pie broke into ugly looking pieces.

"Christopher! Don't! Mother made those for dinner tomorrow. Please!"

"Sissy!" Christopher cried. "With all these pies who'll miss this one?" he asked, stuffing pie into his mouth as fast as he could. Heather was in tears. "Oh, Christopher, don't you realize that Jesus sees how very bad you are? Why you... you're stealing Mother's pie! Her Thanksgiving pie!"

"She's my aunt, Heather; she won't mind."

"Then why didn't you ask her for a piece of pie? Just look what you've done to that beautiful, beautiful pie, Christopher! It's a mess..., what's left of it."

"I'll throw what I can't eat away. Aunt Martha won't miss one pie."

"Yes, she will. She only made two pumpkin pies," Heather said as tears ran down her cheeks. "And besides, you should have asked if you could have a piece. Oh, Christopher, why didn't you run away from the temptation, like the Bible says we're to do? Just look what you've done! The pie's a mess, and the floor is too. What will Mother say!" "Don't you tell her."

"She'll see for herself. And if she asks if I did it I'll have to say I didn't; because I didn't."

"I'll tell her you did," came Christopher's immediate retort.

"But... but that would be telling a lie?" the little girl exclaimed, shocked at her cousin.

"What's going on down here?" Christopher's mother asked, coming downstairs to the basement.

"Heather got into Aunt Martha's Pumpkin pie," Christopher said, quickly, running to his mother.

"Oh, Heather, you wouldn't, would you?" Christopher's mother asked, looking shocked and very much surprised.

"No, Aunt Margaret, I didn't." Drawing her breath in quick-like, Christopher's mother saw the mess on the carpeted basement floor and she saw the remains of the once picture-pretty pie which her sister had made and brought to the basement table.

"Let me see your hands," she demanded of her son.

Christopher began to cry. "I... I. . . ." He stuttered and stammered.

"Oh, Christopher," his mother cried. You lied to me! You have broken my heart. You know the Bible says all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire. You know this, and still you chose to tell a lie! Oh, my son! My son! When are you going to change? When are you going to allow Jesus to save you!" and the mother was sobbing brokenly.

Christopher began to sob, too. His heart was wicked, he saw, suddenly; and it was deceitful, too. Oh, he must do something about it. He must! He must! "Mother, I'm sorry! Really sorry! I broke your heart and ... and I broke Jesus' heart. I want to change. I want Jesus to forgive me. Now..."

A short time later, Christopher, with a shining face and a forgiven heart, marched bravely up the steps and confessed his sin and wickedness to his Aunt Martha, Heather's mother, and he was freely forgiven. He was so happy that he grabbed Heather by the arm and said, "Now I know

why you are so kind and sweet and good: Jesus changed me too. Let's go out in the snow and make angels."

And away they ran after boots, coats, gloves and caps.

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December 1988

Story 6

## CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Aletha was sad. Very sad. Ever since Mrs. Crosby had asked her and her sister Arlis to be the two angels in the school play, Arlis would scarcely talk. And she stayed in the bedroom which they shared for too much of the time. Worse still, each time she, Aletha, tried to find out what was bothering her twin, Arlis seemed to look even sadder and would say, "I just want to be alone, Aletha. I love you very much. Just close the door and leave me alone for a while."

A tear slid silently out of the corner of one of Aletha's brown eyes. Then one sneaked out of the corner of the other eye. Oh, she must not cry! Not in school! If Mrs. Crosby saw her tears she would wonder why she was crying. And what could she tell the teacher? Nothing! She couldn't say that, ever since she and Arlis were chosen to be angels, Arlis was..., well..., different. No, that just wouldn't do. Mrs. Crosby would then ask Arlis if she didn't want to be an angel; and Aletha knew that Arlis was very happy to be an angel.

Aletha looked down at her desk, then she glanced across the room at her twin. Oh, how she loved Arlis! And she knew Arlis loved her every bit as much, too. Mrs. Crosby had separated them so each could sit beside a shy child and become friends with that child. The teacher had told them to make sure their shy little friends were included in every game they played.

Aletha Smiled at Trish, sitting next to her. Trish smiled back. Aletha wanted to print a note to Trish saying, "I love you," but she knew Mrs. Crosby had said they didn't pass notes to each other during school hours. So she decided to print the words and give the note to Trish, with her own name signed at the bottom, after school was out for the day. Jesus wanted her to be kind to Trish and she loved doing anything Jesus wanted her to do. And she wanted to be obedient to Mrs. Crosby, too.

"And now we'll practice for our Christmas play." Mrs. Crosby's voice made Aletha forget about Trish for the moment. She loved practice. Oh, how she did love to practice. And Trish loved it, too. Aletha could tell that she did by the way she smiled and said her part so excellently.

Mrs. Crosby had the children stand to their feet and, in a very quiet way, they pushed their chairs beneath their desks in an orderly and neat way. Then she told them to line up against the wall in a straight line, like soldiers.

"We will be practicing our parts up on the platform today, children," she said. "So, very quietly, and no whispering or talking, I want you to file into the main auditorium. We will be going through everything the way you will be presenting the wonderful Christmas story of Jesus' birth to your fathers and mothers. Do your best. I know you will. Now follow me, please."

It was while Arlis was going through her part that she broke down and sobbed as though her heart would break. Mrs. Crosby rushed up to the stage and put her arms around the sobbing girl.

"Why, Arlis, whatever is the matter?" she asked, looking a bit alarmed. "Are you sick?" she questioned, pushing the girl away far enough to look squarely into her face. "Where are you hurting?"

"N... no... where, Mrs.... Crosby," came the stammering reply.

"Then why are you crying?" the teacher asked, while a group of astonished children looked on with frightened eyes.

"Oh, Mrs. Crosby, I... I don't feel worthy to be an angel. They... they are..., such holy beings."

"This is only a play," one of Arlis' friends told her, bending over and looking up into the tear-filled eyes.

"B . . . but an angel!" Arlis exclaimed, as a flow of fresh tears streamed from her eyes. "I... I'm not good enough to . . . to be an angel."

"But you love Jesus, Arlis," Aletha remarked, hurrying to her twin and putting her arms around her. "You do love Jesus, don't you, Arlis?" she asked in a soft voice.

"Yes, I love Jesus. Very much. But Daddy read about the angels one day in family worship. They... they are shining, holy beings, and they praise Jesus all the time. Oh, Aletha, I... I... I'm not like those beautiful angels in the Bible."

"Arlis," Mrs. Crosby said kindly, "I'm not like those lovely angels either. Neither is your father, nor your mother. They are heavenly beings. They are clothed in white. Just like you and Aletha, and all the saved and sanctified people will be when we get to Heaven. The Bible says, in Revelation 19:7 and 8, 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him [God]: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'

" 'And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'

"So you see, dear Arlis, everyone who is saved and sanctified wholly will someday receive a garment of clean, fine linen, all white and bright. This will happen when we enter Heaven, honey. And while we live down here on earth and are now people of this earth, someday,

when Jesus calls us home to Himself, we will wear our beautiful new Heavenly garment. And then we shall be white and bright like the angels. And now, shall we go on with our practicing,? Are you ready, Arlis?"

Yes, Mrs. Crosby. Thank you for what you said. I'm so happy to know that Jesus will give me a shiny-white, bright garment when I get to Heaven. And while I live down here on this earth I mean to love Jesus with all my heart and to always please Him. maybe I can't be like the angels but I can shine for Jesus. And that's what I'll do." And Arlis smiled and dried her tears and took her place on the stage.

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THE END