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The Upward Pull

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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"Don't you just love spring, Joel?" Jimmy asked, removing his blue and white gym shoes and relacing the strings up the front in a sort of crazy zig-zag pattern.

"Now why'd you do that?" Joel wanted to know, frowning upon his ten-year-old brother.

" 'Cause I'm happy and I wanted to change the pattern. I get tired of sitting here on the step looking down at my laced just-right shoes. This zig-zag pattern will keep me occupied while you untangle that string."



"You sure made a mess of things," Joel scolded. "I told you how to hold the kite string and how to feed it out as the wind catches the kite and takes it up into the sky. How come you didn't pay attention?"

"I did, Joel; honest, I did. But it sounds so much easier to do than it is. Could you do it real good when you were as little as I am?"

Joel looked half disgusted. That boy! he thought, pulling fiercely on the tangle mess of string held in his hands.

"Could you fly a kite really real good when you were ten?" Jimmy asked again.

"Sure I could, Jim," Joel retorted angrily. "Now stop asking so many questions and let me concentrate."

"Con . . . concen . . . trate? What's that, Joel? Is it something to help you untangle the knots faster and better?"

Getting to his feet, Joel tossed the tangled mess of string to the ground. "Do it yourself," he exclaimed stormily. "I never have seen the likes of you; questions, questions and more questions."

Jimmy's eyes were great pools of shimmering, shiny tears. "I'm sorry, Joel. Sorry/Please finish it for me; I want to fly the kite. I promise. I'll try to be real still while you work."

Seeing the tears, Joel recanted and once again picked up the string. He felt ashamed of himself, scolding a brother as fine and as sweet and dear as Jimmy. But sometimes Jimmy got "under his skin," too. Today was one such day.

Brushing the unruly cowlick lock of hair off his forehead, Joel glanced sideways at his brother. Jimmy was lacing and unlacing the gym shoes, over and over again and again, first one way then another. Tears were wetting the laces; this Joel noted with a bit of pain stinging his heart. Jimmy was such a very sensitive and tenderhearted boy, he knew--so sensitive and open to God's voice and to anything spiritual.

"Look, Jim," Joel said, quickly putting an arm around his brother's drooping shoulders, "I'm sorry I was angry with you. Sorry I scolded you, too. Let's forget it, and I promise I'll try to do better. OK?"

Jimmy lifted his large blue eyes to meet his brother's dark brown ones. " 'Course I'll forget it, Joel; I love you so. But... but.., what happened to you? I mean, you.., you never used to be like you are now. Don't you love Jesus anymore? 'Cause even if you don't love Him, He still loves you. I know He does; the Bible says so."

Joel gulped and swallowed. Pulling frantically on a tangled mass, he soon had the string untangled and wound neatly around the spool again. Ignoring his brother's probing questions and his even deeper-probing eyes, he exclaimed with a carefree air, "Well, Jim, she's all yours. The tangles are out and your kite's ready for sailing into the wide blue yonder."

Tying his shoe laces in a crazy way, Jimmy got to his feet. "Help me get it up, Joel. Please! You know how so much better than I."

"Come on then. It's to the open lot, away from telephone poles and wires and any such thing that could tangle a kite up. I really like this kite, Jim; it looks like a giant eagle. You made a good choice when you went to the store."

Jimmy's eyes were shining. "Thanks, Joel. But I guess I picked this kite because I like birds so well. God made so very many beautiful things, didn't He?"

"I'll have to agree on that," Joel conceded in a low key. "And now, here we go; up, up and away for your great eagle." And slowly and carefully Joel hoisted the kite to the full spring breeze, feeding string from the spool of cord as the upward tug and pull demanded.

Jimmy's eyes never left the kite, and when Joel had it a-sail he said, "OK, Jim, it's yours now. With a little 'know-how' you'll be able to keep it up for hours. Here, Pal, take over."

Laughing joyously, Jimmy took hold of the string. Then his excited squeals filled the air. "Joel! Joel!" he cried. "The kite's pulling me! Oh, it's trying to pull me up to where it is! It's wonderful, Joel; just like Jesus will do when He comes back for His children. I'll go up, Joel. Are you still ready to go, too? Isn't it wonderful! Just imagine, nothing can hold us here when Jesus comes back for us." Then in a sadder tone of voice the ten-year-old added, "Nothing can hold anyone here but.., but sin! Are you ready to go up, Joel?"

Taking quick long strides away from the lot and his brother's questioning voice and penetrating eyes, Joel all but raced home. Once inside the garage, the seventeen-year-old busied himself with polishing and waxing his already-shiny red bicycle. Jimmy's words, however, sang themselves over and over in his mind like a broken record: "Are you ready to go? Nothing can hold anyone here but.., but sin. Nothing... but sin; sin; sin."

It was almost maddening, Joel thought, leaving the garage and hurrying inside to his bedroom. But when he sat down in a chair to think, his eyes landed on Jimmy's open Bible on the bed. How he wished he had a room of his own! Yes, Jimmy was a super brother, he had to admit, but so very religious.

Joel gulped. Religious! Why, he used to be the same way. Yes, he was. And until he met Patrick Oalden and started running around with boys other than church boys, he was every bit as happy and satisfied with Jesus as Jimmy was. It was his association with the wrong crowd that was slowly but surely taking him downward, the boy suddenly realized with fear and a sense of awakening.

Getting quickly to his feet, he walked over to the bed and picked up Jimmy's Bible.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Jimmy had the verse outlined with a red marking pencil. It seemed to shout at Joel, warning him to be ready.

Trembling with fear, he dropped to his knees beside the bed and poured his soul out to a merciful and gracious God who freely and willingly forgave him of his sins and his backsliding and restored to him the long-lost peace and joy and rest.

Hurrying out of the house, he ran to the lot. "Jimmy, Jimmy!" he cried happily. "Guest what? I'm ready for God's upward pull. Nothing can hold me here. Nothing! I settled the sin question a little while ago in our bedroom."

Jimmy's eyes were shining. "Take the string, Joel, and feel the tug," he said quickly, "while I go somewhere and thank Jesus for answering my prayer. ' '

Hugging his brother, Joel obeyed. He would have a lot of changes to make, but the Lord would go before him and help him, he knew. And this time, he was going to do a thorough job of breaking all worldly ties and leaving every ungodly associate. Like Jimmy, and his parents, he was going up when Jesus returned for His Bride. He had too much fight to miss the City.

He smiled, hearing Jimmy returning and singing for joy. Jimmy was a super-good brother. Yes, indeed!

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THE END