



**BEDTIME STORIES
FOR SLEEPY TYKES**

by

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20 short stories for ages 5-7

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CONTENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Subtitle</u>
When the Wind Blows	3	Will two cats get their wish?
Our Emily	6	She has a good imagination.
Thank You for Me	8	Is a picnic really important?
Freckles	12	Donna discovers a treasure.
Listen, Listen	15	A Journey has surprises.
Tippy-Toes	19	Now what could that be?
Hurry Up, Cat	22	Time to be very patient.
Everyone Loves Paul	26	A little rest might help.
Mother is Forever	29	Someone is full of pep.
My Face	32	Drawing pictures is such fun.
From a Boy's Heart	34	Giving is sometimes better.
Perry Partridge	38	Three woodland friends.
A Walk with Grandpa	43	Hiking is full of memories.
Hi Sky	48	When is a mystery solved?
One + One = Two	51	One plus one equals friends.
Eating Out	54	Hey, don't touch my plate!
Hello and Goodbye	58	Many sights in downtown.
Hurry Up, Paul	61	When your room is untidy.
A Friend Forever	65	Helping others is kind of neat.
Mom Said, No	69	A special time with friends.

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

Whiskers and Scruffy squeezed from under the garage and padded into the bright morning sun. The shed door in the next yard was still banging because of the wind.

"No wonder we didn't get a good snooze last night," they said.

"And we don't dare go in that other backyard," said Whiskers.

"Yah. The mean man might be there," Scruffy answered.

The last time they walked through his yard, he scared them off by smacking his broom on the verandah. Those fat pussycats ran faster than they ever did before.

"Look!" Whiskers said, trying to keep his voice down.

"What? What?" asked Scruffy.

"Something in your eye, you can't see?" scolded Whiskers.

A little sparrow had just landed and began to peck away at seeds sprinkled over the ground. He didn't notice both cats smacking their lips as they watched from their side of the fence.

Just then, a Pileated Woodpecker ran up the tree. His red fluffy head was almost like a waving banner. It seemed to say, "Hello, down there."

Whiskers and Scruffy squinted their eyes at the delicious sight. A few more sparrows had joined in the early breakfast treat. And somehow they did not notice any danger lurking nearby.

Growling cat-tummies reminded them it must be mealtime. But they had to be careful not to bother any birds. They heard from other alley cats, "Don't mess with the mean man's protected pets."

In cat language, that meant 'don't bother the birds.'

High above, a squirrel shook his head. Not those two again? He was nice and safe in the hollow of a large Norway maple tree.

If only the wind would stop blowing leaves into his home, he'd really be happy. It seemed Bushy Red was always worrying.

Now Chickadees, Starlings and a Blue Jay joined the sparrow. Some landed on several branches. Others munched from bird feeders hanging from several Maple trees.

Two Evening Grosbeaks perched on top of the fence. A light shower of rain wasn't going to bother their feathers.

Soon, the backyard filled with bird chatter. The commotion brought two more beautiful Blue jays. They joined Pine Siskins and Junco's on the ground.

It was quite a scene, as Bushy Red chewed on a sunflower seed. His red tail held high, like a furry flag.

Birds of all shapes and sizes skittered and scratched around on the ground. They flew back and forth to feeders, like jets on a busy airfield.

It didn't matter if the wind kept blowing its cool breath over everyone. The cozy sun still provided a promise of warm fur and feathers.

Now three cats crouched as bundles of fur, jumping each time leaves scattered like confetti over the yard. They were soon caught up in the magic of the moment.

Various colored feathers fluttered and fluffed as feeders swayed like swings in the park.

Maybe the mean man wasn't so nasty after all. Perhaps he simply wanted a place where birds and animals could like in peace?

After all, birds needed a place where no one would bother them. The owner and his wife spent much time enjoying their birds. "Safe Place" was a message enjoyed by all feathered friends.

"Sunflower seeds, grain and red millet awaited any hungry bird. And Niger seed as well.

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence even had their own cat. JC was nineteen years of age, and would never hurt any bird. She enjoyed watching them play like children.

For Whiskers and Scruffy peeking between the spaces in the fence was like watching a video in living color.

Also watching were Bushy Red, and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence. It was a wonderful pastime since their children had grown up. And moved away.

The birds continued to have fun as they scratched at the ground and skittered around the yard.

A puff of wind was also pleased to be part of this backyard party. With one huge breath, he brought in the peace of autumn.

And everyone was glad.

OUR EMILY

I draw
a baby blue sky

where
marshmallow clouds
play like children.

Lakes are really
puddles
large like the
ocean

and sparkly from
the sun.

I draw
pretty flowers
and paint them with
nice smells

and lots
of cheerful colors.

A squiggly line
becomes the wind.

Blue Jays
are on shaky branches.
I draw strong legs
so they won't fall off.

Waves come
even higher than a cup

of rain drops.

They make loud
SPLATS.

I fall down
a rainbow
into the sea.

Now
I am swimming.

I see fish
with HUGE eyes.
Oh, it's my mommy
and daddy.

They squeeze me
with happy hugs.

THANK YOU FOR ME

When I wake up my eyes look for mommy. Then my arms throw off my blanket.
Now it's an airplane flying across the room.

SMACK! Against the wall.

My feet feel like icicles when I touch the floor. YIPES! I have to hop, skip and jump
to the window. And see lots of green grass.

Soon, daddy will have to cut it short. So it can grow up all over again.

A whole stack of birds are playing chase each other. Some are singing, "Want to
come out and play?"

Silly me, birds can't talk. But, it's fun to pretend.

"Soon," I whisper.

"Melanie!" Mommy is calling. "Breakfast!"

I'm so hungry. "COMMMING!!" Sometimes I scream really loud.

Then I crash into daddy trying to race me down the stairs. Sometimes he even lets
me win. Not today though.

Mommy has brown eyes like mine, with thick eyelashes. When I reach up my arms
for a hug, her smile is wide like the ocean.

"Hungry dear?" she asks.

I sit down at my own place at the table. Then I pat my dress really smooth. "Yes mommy," I say, licking my lips.

It's fun making mommy happy.

After we eat, I go outside and look at the sky. We need sunshine for our picnic today. But the sky is dark and cloudy.

And the birds are gone. It makes me sad.

"If we still go for our picnic, will it thunder and lightning?" I ask.

"Don't worry dear," mommy says. "Daddy will be beside you all the time. He won't let anything happen to you."

When I'm afraid, daddy almost cries. Today I want to be brave. We take egg sandwiches. And drinks.

My favorite is lemonade.

We walk really far until my legs get tired. I don't want a 'lift up'. I'm a big girl now. I'm a whole five years old.

Suddenly it starts to rain. And floppy drops fall from the sky.

"Our picnic might have to be cancelled," mommy says.

It's her turn to feel sad now.

When lightning comes, I get really afraid. Daddy picked me up and we all run home. I'm glad Victoria Park is close to our house.

After we get into dry clothes, mommy gets us hot chocolate. That makes me very happy. Especially when she puts in two marshmallows.

I get brown whiskers on my face. Is that why JC, our cat is looking at me funny? I think her neck gets tired, looking up all the time.

Maybe it's because I'm really tall for my age.

Now Daddy is watching TV. His football game is on.

Mommy brings me my 'rainy day' kit. I draw two eyes with my pencil. They can see right through the window.

They watch water making little rivers in the street.

And they help me count my fingers. TEN! Then I count my toes. TEN! I make my eyes look really huge.

They can see everything in the whole world.

Then I draw my nose. So I can smell all the roses in our garden. And the baking my mommy is now making.

YUMMY! Smells come from the kitchen.

Now I draw two great big ears. They can hear flapping wings. Maybe it's from little ducks in the pond outside.

I even hear "BUZZ-BUZZING" from mosquitoes. Listen...footsteps are coming down the hall.

"Melanie?" Daddy asks.

I pretend I can't hear. I hide under the bed.

"WHERE ARRRE YOUUU?"

I hope daddy doesn't hear my cheeks laughing. I pinch my nose. My face is like a circle, full of pictures.

That way everyone knows me.

I'm like a painting on a wall.

I even pretend I'm a wave on the lake.

Or a little girl hiding under her bed, all rolled up, like a kitten fast asleep. Soon someone is carrying me.

When my eyes open a teensy bit, I'm in my bed under the covers. Teddy bear is under my arm.

My head turns right, then left. JC is beside me.

I look up. Now it's my turn to give a mile wide smile.

Mommy and daddy are watching me.

When I my arms reach up, mommy smiles.

Daddy does too.

I'M SO GLAD I'M ME!

FRECKLES

"Donna!!"

There goes my brother Chris. He's ten. I'm seven. "WHAAT??" I can yell really loud, too.

"Come 'ere! Hurry!"

"Why?"

"Because."

If he would explain, then I could decide.

"I want to show you something."

Mom doesn't like to see us fight. But we do. Then after awhile we're friends again. Sometimes brothers can be a pain.

"Coming," I said. Since dad moved away my brother needs me a lot. My Sunday school teacher says I should still love everybody. "Even my brother?" I asked.

"Yes." Then she opened up her bible and showed me John 3:16 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.' When my dad left, it made us sad. But I still love him.

Even though he won't be with us this Christmas.

I really like my bible. Mr. Lawrence, my next-door neighbor gave it to me. I think it is such a nice gift.

At first I thought it was because he felt sorry for me.

"How come mom?" I asked after he did.

"Because we're new in church and."

"And?" I asked.

"He said you had such cute freckles for a little girl!"

"But I'm not a little girl mom," I said. "Mr. Lawrence should see that."

"Are you coming or not?" A loud voice tumbled down the stairs.

I finally went up to my brother's room. "Well what do you want?" I asked. Chris has even more freckles than me.

At school they tease him all the time, he said. They call him 'freckle puss.' "Nobody better call me that," I said back.

"Lookit what I built for you," My brother said.

This made me feel really good. "For me?"

It was a blue and white cross, made out of Lego. He knew I like to go to Sunday school. Sometimes my brother can be very nice.

We played with his Lego some more.

Then I made a house with a funny roof. With a barn in back, and some animals drinking from a pond.

I thought about Christmas coming soon. And baby Jesus.

So I made a new house. This time it was not a funny house. It wasn't even a castle, just a little stable for a little boy. He would grow up to be Our Savior.

"Thank you." I said to my brother, "for letting me play with your Lego." Then I gave him a big hug.

"This Christmas won't be so bad," I said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you're my special brother. And I love you."

He couldn't say any words. I rushed out to get my Bible.

Then I sat on the floor beside Chris and read John 15:11-12. Jesus said, "This is my commandment. That you love one another, as I have loved you."

"That goes for me too," he said.

LISTEN, LISTEN

The tricycle crossed back and forth like a snake, before coming to the edge of the campground.

Four-year old Colin halted suddenly, then looked around. Mom always said to check carefully before crossing the trailer park road.

“Wait, If any cars come,“ she told him this morning. So he patiently waited, just in case. All he could see was one parked on the other side of the road.

His feet now rested on his blue tricycle pedals.

Colin stared at the shiny old car. Daddy said it was an antique. The little boy did not know what that meant. Maybe he should drive his tricycle closer for a better look.

"Don't touch!" Mommy and daddy shouted from their camp cots.

Colin's hands flew to his face. He quickly turned his front wheel towards the gravel road. It was time to move again.

He was proud of his brand new shiny tricycle. Red handlebars and a white seat made up the rest of today's birthday present.

Riding around the trailer park was going to be great fun. He also had on his new blue rubber boots to keep his feet warm.

The little boy raised his head and listened to a new sound. A chattering came from the tree above him. "Hello Chatty," he said to his squirrel friend.

Colin told mommy and daddy he was going on a treasure hunt. But he didn't think 'Chatty' could be of much help. He just had to find it himself. And he had to do it before lunch.

Let's see now, where could it be?

He noticed the next trailer had a birdhouse and feeder. Was his treasure hiding there?

He leaned his tricycle up against the clothesline pole. It was tall enough to discourage raccoons, but not determined little boys.

Colin carefully climbed up on his tricycle seat.

Then he reached in and felt around the stack of birdseed. The Chick-a-Dees swooped around and convinced him to get down quickly.

"Nothing here," their flapping wings seemed to say. "Look somewhere else," their Chick-a-Dee-Dee song told him. Colin quickly slid down the pole and raced away on his tricycle.

Both feet became pistons as they turned the pedals furiously. He had to hurry past the next campsite. There was a scary dog guarding the lawn.

"RURF! RURF" sounds followed Colin as he raced by.

Then something strange happened. His tricycle began to swing back and forth on the road. It seemed to have a mind all of its own.

Colin had a habit of scrunching up his nose when he became serious. He listened to music coming from the pretty blue trailer.

It sounded as if someone was dancing inside. Even their pretty flowers seemed to sway to the music.

Colin's fingers began tapping on his handlebars. Now his arms were waving around as if they belonged to a maestro.

Was this beautiful music the treasure? Colin wondered. He decided it wasn't.

He followed the road around the corner sure that journey's end was nearby. Colin was determined to find the treasure.

It had to be somewhere.

Was it possible for the treasure to be hiding in the playground? There were many secret places around here. First, he checked around the chairs in the rain shelter.

Then he climbed the ladder on the slide so his eyes could see everywhere. Now he was high up in the sky.

Colin yelled out, "CAW! CAW!" It was fun pretending to be a crow. Suddenly, the whole flock began answering. "CAW! CAAAW!"

One flew swiftly towards him from the trees as if it wanted to be friends.

Some of the crows were so huge they looked like 'Flying Houses'. Colin closed his eyes and listened to their calling sounds. He watched their flying games before returning to his tricycle.

Today was full of fun adventures.

By now both legs were getting tired. He had traveled a long way for such a little boy. He decided it was time to make his way back to the trailer.

What would mommy and daddy say when he returned without any success?

Hey, there's daddy watering the lawn. Now, where's mommy? He wondered.

"MOMMY!"

She came out of the dining tent and gave him a great big hug. Then Colin turned his head sideways as he heard something. The kettle was boiling on the camp stove!

Could this be a clue?

"Find anything?" daddy asked.

Colin was feeling a little sad. He didn't really want to answer right away.

Mommy leaned down and whispered, "Look in the dining tent. On the table, quickly."

He jumped off his tricycle and unzipped the nylon screen door. Then he rushed to the table. Colin felt his heart's happy 'THUMP, THUMPING'!

The boy's eyes were opened wide as saucer plates. "Daddy, I found it!" he yelled. "A real treasure! Look! Peanut butter cookies!!"

He knew Mommy had baked them just for him.

They were Colin's favorite kind.

TIPPY-TOES

A tapping noise woke up Brittany. What was making that racket, she wondered?

She slowly carefully raised her head like a cat does when something annoying happens. Brittany looked around her room.

The darkness did not frighten her.

She lifted off her warm blankets and stepped upon the coolness of the floor. Her white nightgown made her look like a ghost.

Did a real ghost make that noise?

She walked slowly down the hall. Were her parents up? She wondered. So she checked their bedroom.

Her toes went TIP, TIP, TIPPY on the wooden floor. Her heart went THUMP, THUMP a THUMP. Hmm. Mom and dad were still asleep. Dad was snoring as usual.

His ZZZ'S followed her to the next room, where her brother Chris slept. Brittany could see a white sign on the door. But she couldn't read.

Mom told her it said NO TRESSPASSING. Brittany had to find out who or what was making the strange noise.

She pushed open her brother's door, very slowly. It squeaked a wee bit. She noticed Chris curled up asleep on his bed. One blanket lay on the floor.

He wasn't making that noise. She quietly closed the door and tip toed down the hall.

Now to the kitchen, maybe Hugo the cat was looking for food. Yes. It must be Hugo. He was always hungry.

Maybe he is drinking out of the sink again and wants to go out. Maybe the tap is dripping, maybe.

Down the stairs one at a time hold on to the rail. Down and down. Almost like creeping down a mountain.

Guess what? No noise in the kitchen. Oh, see under the chair. Hugo is sleeping. He is all stretched out, like a huge whale.

His head bobs up when he sees Brittany. He meows, then lays down and falls asleep again.

He begins to purr like a motor.

Brittany could not find any tapping noise here.

She decides to go into the playroom, where she has to step around all the toys. "Have to be really quiet," she says to herself. "I don't want to make any noise."

Being a little tired she sat down on the floor and listened very carefully. Again she heard the sound, like someone tapping at the window.

Brittany got a chair and climbed up. Her nose was moist as she pressed against the glass window.

Her eyes acted like two flashlight beams, searching for the sounds. She stared into the night and listened.

Suddenly the mystery was solved. It was a tree branch blowing against the window. The wind and maple branch had worked together to make tapping sounds.

Now Brittany could go back to sleep.

She got off the chair and walked slowly around her toys, once again. Then she TIPPY-TOED through the kitchen, past Hugo.

As she climbed the stairs, her feet were quiet as shadows. The stairs only made one little squeak.

Brittany walked past her brother's room and her parent's room. Then back to her room.

Her cold feet were happy. Finally, they could have a rest.

She crawled under her waiting blankets.

Before too long, she was fast asleep.

Her ZZZ'Z joined her father's down the hall.

HURRY UP, CAT

Smoke drifted upwards from the barbecue. It sure smelled good for the Lawrence family.

JC, their cat didn't agree. For her, it meant coughing and choking time. At first the gray mist was only a small cloud. Then it grew into separate piles, like dirty foam. They seemed to bounce off the high wooden fence.

It was almost like waves rolling in from the sea.

JC watched with eyes stretching wide as the moon. Her whiskers twitched nervously. She jumped around like a rabbit. Except she wasn't a rabbit looking for an escape route.

She was an old "scared-cat" cat.

And her "Meows" were not sounds of happiness. She searched for an escape route. Where was her master?

She needed to hide from the smell.

JC's heart pounded wildly.

Claws dug into the soft earth. Her tail flicked, back and forth. Back and forth, like windshield wipers.

Smoke from the barbecue mussed her nose. Smells from hotdogs and steak were wonderful for humans.

Except not for a cat. Oh no, not for JC.

She left the scene quickly. Stinky, dirty smoke would cover her gray and white fur.

JC was a friendly seventeen-year old cat. Her patience with children was well known with everyone. They loved to pat her lovely fur coat.

Not right now, though. It was "hurry-up and scoot" time.

Her paws padded around the house. She headed across the street to Victoria Park. A car hurried by.

It had tires that looked like rolling pizzas.

JC's fur shot up in fear. Her feet retreated to the backyard, even if ghost looking smoke was still there.

If she had more legs she could run faster.

She choked and gagged her way into the neighbor's yard. Her silent feet padded around a child's wagon. Then she jumped over a rusting bicycle. It lay like a trap in her path.

Her paws didn't mind splashing through sneaky puddles.

Of course, Ace was waiting next door. "Yap! Yap!" A mouth full of teeth came rushing towards her.

JC was too old for this kind of excitement.

It was time to climb the nearest tree. Branches dug like fingers into her soft fur. As she watched from her new perch, she spotted Bushy Red.

The noisy squirrel rushed across her porch below. It was a mystery to JC. Why wasn't the squirrel bothered by the smoky smell? Where's he going now? She wondered.

Curiosity made her brave. JC crept backwards down the tree. She finally turned and jumped the last few feet.

At that moment the front door opened. Her master stood there with a bowl of her favorite food. It was crunchy Meow Mix.

JC rubbed against his legs and gave a sad, "Meow." She was not hungry right now. Her "MEEOW!" was much louder the second time.

She didn't wish to stand around in that smelly smoke. "GET OUT OF MY WAY!" she screeched in cat language.

Her tail swept back and forth. "HURRY UP!" it said.

Her master wanted to join his friends at the barbecue. How could he know his dear cat was having a panic attack?

JC looked up with her pitiful look. Her master finally understood and stepped aside.

About time, JC thought.

Her claws scrambled noisily under his legs. Then, across the kitchen floor, tail swishing up the stairs. She leaped two at a time. And bumped her nose along the way.

She jumped across the bed and onto the windowsill.

JC sniffed the air. Did the smelly smoke follow?

The air was nice and fresh in the room.

She could see people still having their picnic fun below. The fog-like mist continued to float around. Children wrestled and hollered. Adults gabbed, while filling their mouths with munchies.

Bushy-red was up in his tree looking at JC. Cat and squirrel stared at each other a few moments.

JC yawned. Then she jumped into the middle of the waterbed.

Her paws found a very comfortable spot. She became an instant ball of curled up fur. JC had peace at last.

No more unfriendly smells.

No children or adults to bother her.

No nosey squirrel. No ghostly mist.

Only time for, sleep.

“Meow.”

EVERYONE LOVES PAUL

“RINGGG!!” comes from a noisy alarm clock.

Paul jumps out of bed. Then runs to the window. Three or four Pine Siskin are poking on the ground for birdseed.

Blue Jays and Sparrows join in the fun. Even a red, bushy-tailed squirrel tries to get his share.

Time to hurry up and dress. Oops, Paul trips over his sneakers.

Crash! Bang! There’s so much noise from a six-year-old boy.

Mom and dad wait patiently downstairs. Paul bangs into the table.

Dad's juice spills on the floor. Oh, oh, two days in a row now.

"Please be more careful," mom says.

Paul gulps down his apple juice. And swallows every tiny speck of cereal.

Hurry, the School Bus is honking. Scary faces stare from every window.

He kisses mom and dad goodbye.

Paul slams the front door. Then he trips over his two-wheeler. Books fly around like kites.

Everyone on the bus is jumping up and down with laughter. This is a usual day for Paul.

And his mother still loves him.

He sits beside James, his best pal. Everybody yells, "Paul! Paul! Tell us some new funny jokes."

There are lots of smiles when Paul is around.

Someone gives him a can of orange pop. Surprise. He didn't know it was shook up before he opened the tab.

"Watch out!" James shouts. Fizzy splatters of sticky liquid flies through the air.

"Oops." Paul says. It was a mean trick. Everyone laughs and points at his red face.

But, his friends still love him.

At school, lockers are opened then slam-dunk closed. Talk-to-you later plans are made with friends.

Hurry up and run to the classroom. Homework is checked. Many hands lift up for questions to ask. Or even answer.

Tiny arms wave like wheat in Saskatchewan fields.

"I know! I know!" Paul shouts. It's the same each lesson. He knows the answers because he's smart.

He's in full motion, like a windmill. Some say he's more like a runaway train.

He gets so excited. He falls out of his seat, again. Slam! Bang! Paul can't stop laughing as he rolls around on the floor.

Even the teacher is giggling.

"Paul's a pain," someone whispers. "He's cool," others say.

And his teacher still loves him.

Finally, the school bell rings. Paul hurries home for supper. After pork chops and potatoes, there's time for fun.

Soccer is Paul's favorite game. He can run like a charging buffalo.

Sometimes he's like a tiger on the loose.

Paul's foot smacks the soccer ball with a mighty kick. Now everyone screams with an awesome roar, "SCORE!!"

Cheers are louder than thunderclaps.

Paul runs to James. And pokes him on the shoulder. "Good pass!" he yells.

And the coach loves him.

Now it's nighttime. Shining stars peek through Paul's window. They watch him brush his teeth. And jump into bed.

Then mom's bedtime story is soon finished.

A tired boy lays his head on a soft pillow.

Busy legs are finally still. His eyelids close. One hand holds tightly to his baseball glove. A Blue Jay baseball cap rests on the floor.

His cat is a ball of black and white fur. She finally gets a chance to curl up against Paul.

Shadows come like a warm blanket.

Daddy tiptoes to his sleeping son. He watches over him. No more noisy sounds from Paul, for now.

No more slipping and falling.

No more noises of laughing or running. Not even sounds of shouting and scoring goals.

Or even a grocery bag full of questions.

Only time for much needed rest. Well, maybe time for a dream or two.

And his father loves him.

MOTHER IS FOREVER

Today is like a huge smile. The clouds are chased away.

Yesterday was a rainstorm. It covered everything. I closed my eyes to keep them dry.

The sky was like a shadow.

Now the sun brings lots of light. It has shiny rays that reach the earth. I want to be one of those sunbeams.

My mother is like the sun. Her smile is a mile wide. My name is Troy. When I was little I was afraid. Now I am like an eagle up high.

I play at Victoria Park. It is named after a famous Queen, from England. My mother told me stories about her.

Today the playground is full of yells. Lots of people are having a picnic. Some kids are playing baseball.

I run like Bushy Red the squirrel. I want to see everything.

I like to have lots of friends.

A new boy came to my class week. Now I am his best friend. My mother tells me I am special, like a baby raccoon.

She says everyone likes me. I know *she* does. My mother tells me that all the time. I love her a lot.

I watch the teeter-totter go up, and down. Then up, and down, faster and faster. When the older boy jumps off, the other end falls down hard.

The little girl is sad.

I don't want the boy to do that again. I hope she grows up to be like my mother.

Swings are my favorite fun times. They swish like a windstorm. My feet kick like dragonfly wings.

My mother says she loves me.

I get down from the sky. My friend George is waiting. He even brought his cat, Boots. What a funny name.

We walk by the creek. It makes happy noises over the rocks. I get my feet wet. George trips on a branch.

We have so much fun.

Boots has a nose like a dog. It keeps moving from side to side. She is very curious.

Mother says I am like that cat. I always ask questions. "Why?" and "How come, mom?" She is very patient with me.

My other friend Tenesha watches from the bridge. She thinks boys are silly. But she likes me. Sometimes she floats my toy ships on the water.

We both live on Rosewyn Place in Truro, Nova Scotia. A friendly squirrel lives in my backyard.

Tenesha helps me look for Bushy Red.

He must be hiding, or visiting his friends. Mother says we must protect small animals. I stop kids from throwing rocks at Bushy Red.

Then I walk Tenesha home. My mother says I am kind.

Mother is waiting inside the house. She has her cooking apron on. I ask, “Did you make...?”

She answers, “Yes, Peanut butter cookies.”

“Yum, yummy, my favorite.” My smile is her treasure. I want to learn how to bake like my mother.

She is awesome.

MY FACE

I draw two eyes
with my pencil.

They see through the window.
And help me count fingers
and my little toes.

"TEN!"

They watch mommy all day.

Next comes a nose,
it can smell the outside rose.
And your yummy baking
from the kitchen.

"AAAH"

I even smell my dog
with his wet fur.

"PHEW!"

Then I draw
two great big ears.
They can hear sounds
of dragonfly wings.

Listen! My striped ball
Is bouncing.
"BUMP! BUMP!"

"BUMP!"

I even hear your
footsteps
when tuck me in
at night.

My face is like
a circle.
Or even a picture for
my
friends.

Now they know
who I am

like a painting on
the wall.

I can be a face on a wave
on a lake.

With a little mouth that
says a great big,

"I LOVE YOU!"

FROM A BOY'S HEART

Mitchell's eyes were huge, almost like a bright moon.

From his window he watched red and green Christmas lights. They flickered like candles in the wind.

Colors in front of houses seemed to dance along the street.

But there was sadness in Mitchell's heart. His shoulders dropped down. His eight-year old fists pressed together.

And he had a frown on his face.

"Not my fault," he said. "I can't find anything nice to buy mom and daddy." They were unhappy words from a little boy.

They hissed like a snake inside the room.

Maybe he didn't look hard enough, was a new thought. It was like a jab in the tummy. Did he, or didn't he?

Tomorrow was Christmas day. And he still didn't have a present for his parents.

His piggybank had only six dollars and twelve cents.

"I don't need any presents this year," he had said. Then he told his parents the real reason. "I have lots of things," Mitchell said.

"What?" asked daddy.

"Don't be silly," said mom.

Their words zoomed like thunder through his mind.

"You don't have to get us anything," his parents said.

"But I do," the boy said. "I want to get something extra special." Daddy wasn't working right now. And mom needed to be cheered up.

Mitchell knew from Sunday School Christmas was more than presents. What should he do?

Then an idea popped up.

Bells rang in his head.

"YESSS!" His feet did a hop and skip, all the way over to his piggy bank. Mitchell had to hurry. There was so little time.

He had look downtown just once more.

Tomorrow was Christmas. And he had to find the perfect gift!

Mitchell put on boots, mitts and a warm jacket. With hat on head, he sneaked out the back door. He held tightly to JC, his cat.

The boy needed company on this trip.

On the street, shopping noises rang loudly in his ears. So many people were shouting. "Buy this. No, buy that."

Store windows were decorated with toys and games.

But there was nothing he could afford. He wouldn't mind if he didn't get a train set. Santa probably didn't get his letter anyway.

The boy's tired feet needed a rest. So he sat down beside a street lamp. JC curled up on his lap.

Mitchell watched bags of goodies being carried from stores.

So little time to find something, he thought.

A horse-drawn wagon stopped beside the curb. He and JC joined adults and older children for a free ride. Up here beside the Clydesdale horses he could see much better.

People were still shopping in downtown Truro. Their arms were filled with presents. Those same stores seemed to call him.

Boy and cat jumped off the wagon. They hurried over to the first display. Mitchell's nose pressed tightly against each window.

It was too much money for that watch. But daddy would sure like it.

And those shoes would look nice on mom.

Maybe, these were not the right gifts. It was hard to see through tears. "What could he give mom and daddy?"

His eyes were getting sore. His legs were tired. Even his hands were cold. Good thing JC was here.

Her "meows" warmed him up like a bowl of warm soup.

Then it was time for Mitchell and JC to return home. Good thing mom and daddy were still asleep on the couch. They must be dreaming he was asleep upstairs.

The boy finally lay on his bed. He still thought about a gift for mom and daddy. What could he do to make them happy?

Like a snowflake on his nose, an idea landed. "Aha" and "YESSS" were happy sounds in his room.

The boy quickly made his plans. "OBOY" he thought.

Morning came swiftly as a teenager on roller blades. Mitchell's mom and daddy couldn't understand why it was so quiet.

Where was their son?

Mitchell was usually the first one up. He enjoyed racing mom and daddy downstairs on Christmas day.

Both parents rubbed sleep from their eyes. Then jumped to their feet and headed downstairs. They stared at the pile of gifts under the tree.

There were so many for a little boy.

But, the very best one was in the middle.

There lay Mitchell, fast asleep. A white ribbon was tied around his waist. It even had a little red bow on his tummy.

And a crayon printed message-

"For MOM and DADDY, from ME."

There were many hugs this Christmas morning.

PERRY PARTRIDGE

Early morning rain made the ground all wet. And soft.

“Hurry up. I’m getting cold,” Bushy-Red said.

The squirrel’s fuzzy fur coat trembled in the wind. As usual, he hung upside down.

Sharp claws held tightly to a large maple tree.

He was very impatient. His black nose wiggled nervously.

His best friend, Perry Partridge was being a slow poke. They were supposed to go on a picnic.

Perry was busy exercising his wings. He wanted to fly at least higher than the lowest branch.

“Be patient,” he called to his friend. “I’m almost finished.”

Perry was still a young Partridge. And he had to keep in practice.

So he ran down the path once more. His three-toed feet left deep marks in the soft soil. Feathers flapped faster and faster.

This time he landed almost on top of Bushy-Red.

“Yikes! Watch it!” the squirrel squealed.

“Try running like Fred-Fox the next time. And keep your head up,” HOOTY Owl chuckled. She was another one of Perry’s good friends.

The little Partridge tried seven more times. Thankfully, crash landing on the ground did not hurt.

Now the three of them sat together. From up here they could see far away. Greenwoods, their homeland was in a valley.

“Look at the tall woods on both sides,” Perry said.

“I see them every day,” HOOTY added.

“Yah, but I don’t,” Bushy-Red scolded. “I think this view is really neat. So there.”

“Now, now,” Perry interrupted. He did not like his friends to argue. And they usually did.

Pretty Pasture looked yellow under the noonday sun. The high grass was a safe place for the Dee-Deer to sleep.

“I can even see a tiny lake,” Perry said. He had never flown this high before.

“That’s North Pond,” HOOTY quickly answered.

“I was at South Pond once,” Busy-Red said.

Their large branch swayed like a swing, back and forth, back and forth. The blowing wind reminded them of their plans.

Just then, two fat floppy crows flew by. “Hello HOOTY!” they yelled.

“HELLOOO,” HOOTY politely answered.

“Cheers to you too, Bushy-Red,” they said.

Bushy-Red was puzzled. “What does Cheers mean?” he asked HOOTY.

“It means, Be Happy,” HOOTY answered.

“Thanks,” Bushy-Red said. “CHEERIES!” he yelled out. Somehow the word did not sound the same.

“Bye-Bye, Perry.” By now the fat floppy crows were almost at Three-Trees. It was a meeting place for everyone in Greenwoods.

“Perry quickly put his wings to his beak. “BYEEE-BYEEE!!” became an echo in the valley.

It was time for the three friends to begin their hike.

Perry flew from branch to branch. All that practice sure helped.

Bushy-Red ran up and down trees. He kept searching around each one for any treasures.

And HOOTY followed with the food sack. It was heavy and she had to rest often.

Finally they stopped beside Creepy Creek. It sang strange noises as it wined through the valley.

Perry and Bushy-Red prepared the snacks. After all, HOOTY had carried the food this far.

There was fresh leaf-tips and bush cranberries for Perry. And they saw a bush full of Hazel nuts for Bushy-Red.

And left over pieces of mouse meat for HOOTY.

After full tummies they rested.

“Remember what happened yesterday?” Perry asked.

“That Ra-Rabbit was sure lucky we came along,” HOOTY answered.

“Yes,” said Bushy-Red. “Something was wrapped around Ra-Rabbit’s front leg.” He and Perry did not know it was a circle of wire.

“It came from the Village of Walking-Trees. Beyond Greenwoods,” wise HOOTY said.

Perry had never heard of that Village before.

HOOTY continued on with her story. “Sounds of thunder and lightning come from their branches. It happens during the time of autumn. And sometimes Dee-Deer fell to the ground. Then they go to Forever Place.”

Perry wrapped his feathery arms around Bushy-Red. The squirrel was sure shaking.

“Please. No more stories about those unwelcome visitors,” Perry said.

First, they had a nice cold drink from Creepy Creek. Then there was time to play.

HOOTY hid first. She found a low branch on a thick pine tree. But they could not find her. She had to call out, “Hoot! Hoot!” until they did.

Perry Partridge decided to hide under a log pile. But his friends could not find him. He had to beat one wing loudly against a fallen tree.

Then they did find him.

Bushy-Red got tired of this game. So they continued on their journey. They kept a watchful eye for “HUSHY-Hawk.”

If that nasty bird caught HOOTY, he would eat her.

They also had to be watchful of C-C Coyote. And W-Wolf. They lived in the Dark Woods, way past North Pond.

Three friends now went for a swim.

They jumped and flew together off huge Rough Rock. It was like a diving board. They shouted and splashed.

And shook wet feathers and fur at each other.

After a nice rest, they headed home.

This time they walked across Pretty Pasture. And then they rushed past Lightning Tree. “Long ago, a crooked arrow came from the sky, “ HOOTY said. “And bent that tree.”

They sang songs and laughed and yelled a lot. Three friends hopped skipped and flew, with Perry leading the way.

Their happy sounds carried across the sky.

High above ‘Eagle Eyes’ slowly flapped her eagle wings. She wanted to make sure three friends returned home safely.

Greenwoods turned dark. Perry and Bushy-Red became sleepy.

And HOOTY flew off until tomorrow.

A WALK WITH GRANDPA

"Are you ready?" Adam asked.

"Yes," his grandpa said.

"Me too," Adam said. "We're going now, mom."

"That's nice," mom said. "Have fun."

"Where are we going grandpa?" asked Adam.

"It's a surprise," said grandpa.

Adam picked up his new backpack. "I brought a water bottle. And dad's compass," he said.

"I'm glad you have a long sleeve shirt," grandpa said. "Mosquitoes like to chew bare arms."

"Could Riley come?" Adam asked.

"Dogs can get lost in the woods," grandpa answered.

Adam and grandpa waved goodbye. Mom, dad and grandma also waved goodbye.

Grandpa and grandson left the trailer site.

"This park is real nice. But it's too hot, grandpa."

"Don't worry," grandpa said. "The woods will be cooler."

Adam showed grandpa where his family camped last summer. "It was very wet,"

Adam said. "The water couldn't drain away."

"My...My. You use big words," grandpa said.

They walked past the playground.

"Sometimes I bring my brother," Adam said. "Colin is three. My mom says I'm a big boy for seven, grandpa."

"You are a big boy Adam," grandpa said. "But even big boys get tired. Do you want to stop for a rest?"

They were now at the end of the trailer park.

"Oh yes," Adam said. His backpack began to feel heavy. "Are you tired too, grandpa?" he asked.

"Yes," grandpa said. "Let's sit for a few minutes. Do you see anything interesting?"

"Some kids are walking their dogs," Adam said. "And a couple of big people are drinking lemonade."

"Isn't it nice just sitting and talking?" grandpa asked.

"Yah," Adam answered. "Let's go now. I want to walk some more."

"OK," Grandpa said. After awhile they came to a sign. Grandpa read out loud, "THE WATER LILY TRAIL."

"What's a water lily grandpa?" Adam asked.

"It's a beautiful flower. And it's part of your surprise," grandpa answered. "Now put bug juice on face, neck and wrists. Make sure none get in your eyes, or in your mouth. It doesn't taste very good."

"Okay grandpa," Adam said.

"Rub a little in your hair. Mosquitoes bite heads too," warned grandpa."

"Look," grandpa. "My water bottle fits good on my belt. Are you thirsty yet?" Adam asked.

"Not yet," grandpa said.

They walked slowly down the wood chip trail. You could hardly even hear their boot steps. Soon they saw a sign and read, 'OBSERVATION TOWER'.

An arrow sign pointed to the right.

"Go first," grandpa said. "You can even be the guide."

Adam was really pleased.

"Pretend that little bridge is over a river," Adam said. "And it's full of alligators. Then, we'll run faster than ever before, grandpa!"

Adam jumped over a log. And rushed towards the bridge. Grandpa quickly followed.

"You're acting like a little kid, grandpa. Just like me," Adam said.

"Well, thank you," Grandpa said. "I feel like a kid."

"Mom said to watch out for poison sumac," Adam said. They couldn't see any. Or poison ivy either. "Whew! That's a relief," said Adam.

A crow shiny as a coin called loudly. Adam tried to copy his noise but he sounded silly. Grandpa so funny when he yelled out, “CAW! CAW!”

Adam and grandpa finally came to a wooden observation deck.

They climbed steps high above the ground. Now, all they could see was marsh, trees and sky.

Grandpa showed Adam how to use his binoculars.

“Do you see your surprise?” grandpa asked.

“There’s a huge pond!” Adam said.

“Yes,” grandpa answered. “Look at those yellow water lilies. And listen to how peaceful the woods are. There are even no sounds of cars or trucks.”

Adam could see a bird making a nest. And frogs are hopping on the edge of the pond. “Yes. This is a nice restful place,” he said.

Grandpa took a picture of his grandson sitting on the rail. He wanted them to remember this trip together.

Then they ate their snack. Adam shared his peanut butter and jam sandwiches. And some gum. Grandpa got the largest piece.

Soon it was time to return home.

Adam found walking sticks for grandpa and himself. The boy was so tired. He could barely stand up.

They climbed the last hill very slowly. Then they had one final rest, as they looked around. Adam’s heart was beating like a drum.

“Close your eyes and listen,” grandpa whispered.

Adam heard all kinds of forest sounds.

The wind whistled in his ears. "Splashing" water came from the creek below. He also heard grandma's favorite bird, the Chickadee.

It was his favorite, too.

They drank the last of their bottled water. Then grandpa said, "We have to go. It will be dark soon."

Grandma and Adam's brother were waiting at the trailer site.

"Where did you go?" Colin asked.

Adam didn't answer. The walk wasn't finished yet. Not until he told grandpa how much fun he had.

Adam turned and said, "Thanks grandpa. That was lots of fun. Maybe we can go again tomorrow."

Then Adam said to Colin, "We went all through the woods. And I wasn't even scared."

"Can I go on a walk next time?" Colin asked.

"Only when you get big like me," Adam proudly answered.

HI SKY

Sarah sat on her front lawn along with Uncle Lawrence. And her cat Boots. The green grass felt nice and cool on her legs and bare feet.

It was a very hot day in the little town of Truro.

Across the street was Victoria Park. A walking path disappeared among the many trees that reached into the sky.

She smiled at clouds looking like marshmallows ready to toast. They bobbed along ahead of the wind.

"I know something," she said suddenly.

Boots jerked his head awake from a deep sleep. Hunting mice last night was hard work. He got up, stretched then jumped into Sarah's lap to continue his nap.

"What do you mean?" her uncle asked. He too had been enjoying the quietness of the moment.

"The sun is going to fall down," Sarah answered.

"Such a silly little girl," he said with a shake of his head. Sarah did not feel sad at his words. Because she knew something he did not.

They decided to go for a walk in the Park. Yes, the trees did stretch high into the sky. They were more like long fingers trying to poke through the clouds.

And Sarah sang a song. Her voice was like a kite blowing in the wind.

“Uncle is watching over me,
and you think I'm very, very silly
but I know, even if you don't
the sun will soon fall down,
you'll have to see.”

“Hurrah!” Sarah yelled. She bent down to pick up a red ball hiding behind some rose bushes. It was the missing one she looked for the other day. Sarah knew mother would be pleased.

Her uncle was also proud of her. Trees ahead of them seemed to stretch on forever.

Uncle pushed her on the swing. Then he watched her climb the exercise ladder and come down quickly on the slide.

They even raced each other to the water fountain.

Sarah was getting tired from all this activity. And the very bright sun continued to fall from the sky. In the meantime it was trying to turn everyone into brown toast.

It was a good thing Sarah and her uncle put on their sunscreen lotion.

Now they watched children playing baseball in the large field. And the wading pool was quite busy today.

Busy swings flew through the air. Boys and girls swung higher and higher as parents kept pushing them. Children kept yelling, “More! More!”

And the sun dropped lower in the sky.

Crows called out a warning. "Caw! Caw!" they shrieked.

"Don't be afraid," Sarah said in answer to their nervous fluttering.

"Aren't you afraid?" Uncle Lawrence asked.

"No, I'm not," was her quick reply.

She wasn't just a brave little girl. Sarah was also a smart little girl. She listened to the stories her mom told. About day and night, and how things change.

Sarah sat on the lawn once. And then her mother's caring hand felt her head. "Are you hot, my dear?"

"Yes," Sarah answered, watching the sky.

"Do you want to come in?" her mother asked.

"Not yet," Sarah said. "I want to stay until the sun falls down. I want uncle to see too."

Everything was beginning to get dark. Almost like a blanket covering the earth.

Mother, daughter and uncle stared at the horizon.

Sundown was a blaze of color. Different shades were stacked one on top of another. Then the sun slowly fell from the sky.

It was just blackness now. "Now I understand," her uncle said.

Later from her bedroom window Sarah blew kisses at the moon. It shone its flashlight beam upon her face.

Mother's goodnight hugs still kept her warm.

The sky was filled with stars that winked at her. Trees were clothed in dark shadows.

And the sun was finally at rest.

Its journey was complete, from morning until night.

ONE + ONE = TWO

David has a new friend. Her name is Robin.

And it makes him very happy. She's his first friend since moving to the village of North River.

One friend plus one equals two friends.

Robin is eight, a year older than himself. She also runs faster than he can. Their first race was on a hill back of his house. And he lost.

David also likes math. His favorite number is 2.

He thinks it is one of the most important numbers there is. Two legs help him run quickly when Ace barks, then chases him.

And David has two hands to help dad with the groceries. His two arms give mom huge hugs. She needs them after a hard day at work.

He even uses them on his rope ladder. Both he and Robin need to be strong to climb to the tree house.

At the breakfast table David checks the time. He doesn't think there is anything unusual about wearing two watches.

Uncle Dick's gift is on his right wrist. It has a white face with a red maple leaf in the

middle.

His other watch has a black face with white numbers that glow in the dark. Aunt Esther bought it for his seventh birthday.

He couldn't decide which one to use. So he decided it was only fair to use both.

One watch plus one equals two watches.

It was a sunny Saturday for David's special walk downtown. But first he had to get Robin who promised to come with him.

David had already asked mom and dad if he could do something different. Today was the day.

His mom made him some laughing clothes, just the way he wanted.

Instead of wearing two of everything, he wanted to have clothes with other colors.

It was for a reason.

Like why he was wearing two watches.

He had two nice pairs of running shoes, the same as many boys his age. This morning he placed a white one on his right foot and a black one on his left foot.

Then he switched his shoelaces so he had white with a black shoe. And black laces with a white shoe.

One color running shoe plus another one equals two running shoes.

Mom also dyed one of his jean legs green and the other blue. Neat, he thought. One color leg plus one equals two.

Now his white shirt had two colors. One arm was purple and the other orange. One arm with color plus one equals two arms with bright colors.

Even deciding which socks to wear was fun. One was red and the other brown. Good thing no one could see a pink toe peeking out.

It didn't matter what he looked like, or how people might stare. He simply wanted to

help people smile a little extra.

David had been hearing too much sadness on the television news lately. It made people grumpy. And their faces looked sad.

Now was the time for him to do something about it.

Would anyone laugh? Or even have smiling faces? He would soon find out.

As he walked down the street with his friend Robin, people turned their heads and stared. At first they slowed their cars, then parked by the road and watched.

David began jumping around, waving his arms and chasing Robin. Some people hung out of windows, not wanting to miss anything.

Other children stopped skateboarding.

Some just sat on their porches and watched as the village began to wake up.

Hands waved and fingers pointed. And hearty chuckles snuck out from between surprised lips.

A few people even sat down on the sidewalk. Even rolling around while holding onto their tummies.

Some screeched and howled at the sight before them.

Others squirmed and twisted trying to get a better look as David and Robin walked past.

By now the gathered crowd began to follow both children. David marched down Main Street, past grocery and gift shops. He wasn't shy to travel from one end of the short street to the other.

Soon, the collection of children and people turned into a little parade. Dogs, cats and a few horses also trotted along.

Seagulls and curious crows flew low so not to miss any of the fun. Nearby, on the edge of the crowd a mom and dad proudly watched.

Their son David and his friend Robin walked boldly back through the village all the way home.

Behind them were shouts and laughter with much clapping. Sadness was a stranger, at least for now.

One smile plus many others equals more than two.

And David plus Robin, equals two friends.

EATING OUT

Licking lips meant happy sounds. They came from Matthew. He was alone at the table. He pushed his water glass away.

Then he picked up the ketchup bottle. Good. His brother and sister are not watching. French fries need lots of 'red stuff'.

It was a busy restaurant.

He could hear glasses clinking, sounds of scraping on plates.

"More water please," people asked. Does no one want more ketchup? He liked ketchup on eggs. And on French-Fries.

Sometimes he wanted ketchup on toast.

Knives were cutting steaks. And steaks. Spoons moved from bowls to mouths. Chairs were moved for better places at the table.

He poured Ketchup over his fries.

Then a voice came like a ghost. "Careful. Not too much."

Matthew jumped. It was dad. He almost dropped the bottle.

How did daddy sneak over here? He was supposed to be sitting with mommy.

"Eat up all the 'yummy' fries. Costs lots of money you know," daddy said.

Matthew couldn't answer right now. His mouth was busy chewing. So he nodded his head up and down. He was like a teeter-totter.

"Want me to help eat some?" daddy asked.

Matthew shook his head. First left, then right. Left, right.

Daddy made a funny face and left.

Matthew's big sister just shook her head.

His brother Travis was eating a hamburger.

"That's not polite, Travis. Stop eating with your mouth open!" his sister shouted.

It looked like fun. So Matthew tried it too.

Then mommy came out of nowhere, like another ghost. She was upset. "You boys," she said. "Listen to your sister."

Matthew's eyes followed her stamping foot. Up and down. Up and down, like another teeter-totter.

"Did you not hear what your sister just said?"

He smiled and opened his mouth. His food was all gone. Matthew was proud of his two missing front teeth.

He looked like a hockey player, just like his brother.

Travis played goalie in a hockey tournament. His team lost 4-0. Now he was really sad.

Matthew was sad too, even mom and dad. And his big sister was sad. He knew because she was grouchy.

The Irving Big Stop Restaurant began to get crowded. Kids came from many of the other teams. And a whole group of adults came too.

Matthew slid off his seat. Soon his legs would grow long to touch the floor. What should he do to cheer up his brother?

"Don't get stepped on," a waitress said. She hurried by with trays of food. She moved so quickly. Matthew wondered why she didn't trip.

He stepped around clumps of food on the floor. "People are so messy," he said shaking his head.

"How much is that gum?" he asked. The candy counter was filled with goodies.

He didn't have any money. But he was curious.

The lady found out he was alone. So, she brought Matthew back to his table. "You're too young to be by yourself," she said.

"I want to get a present for my brother," he said.

The lady gave Matthew a hard candy. He tasted it in case Travis did not like it. "Yummy," Matthew said.

Maybe he should get his brother a different gift.

His sister said, "He won't go on his own, again." Her stare almost burned holes through his forehead.

Travis had finished eating his own plate of French fries. He didn't even sneak any from Matthew. "Can I have the rest of your hamburger?" he asked. "I'm still hungry."

"Okay," Matthew said. He had already eaten half of it anyway. "But don't eat my French fries," he said.

His brother and sister seemed busy. So Matthew left the table, again. This time he headed for the large windows. On the other side was a large parking lot.

A huge smokestack poked out from a tractor-trailer truck. Santa Claus brought him one just like it, last Christmas.

He would like to buy a present like that. Maybe Travis could play with his model later at home.

Matthew wandered around the restaurant dining room. He stared at the cake display. His nose pressed against the glass. His mouth began to water. "Yum...yummy," he said.

Mommy should get a cake like that for Travis.

Matthew was getting tired. It was time to return to his table, and his French fries. He took a different way back.

He saw many kinds of food being eaten.

There were salmon sandwiches, potatoes, pies and ice cream. And of course, more French-Fries.

"French fries!" Suddenly he remembered. His own French fries must be getting cold. He thought he heard licking sounds coming from his table.

Was someone eating his French fries?

His little legs moved quickly. There was a whole crowd of people. Mommy and daddy were in the middle.

"Yum... Yummy!" they were saying. Everyone was making licking sounds. They watched as Matthew ran towards them.

His brother's arms circled Matthew's plate. He was guarding Matthew's French fries!

His smile for Matthew showed two missing front teeth.

Matthew really loved his older brother.

He gave him a huge hockey smile back.

HELLO AND GOODBYE

"Let's go shopping," mom said. "It will be fun."

Andrew was very pleased. This was his first shopping trip since moving to Truro! He hopped and skipped. All the way to Inglis Place.

"Can I let go of your hand now?" he asked. His new friends might see.

"Okay. But, I'll be right behind you," mom answered. She wasn't allowing her son out of her sight. No way.

"Can I be the guide?" Andrew asked. His little legs walked proudly. He lifted his head high. He didn't want to miss anything.

Mom smiled at her little son. It was such a peaceful day. The sun was like momma's warm breath on his face.

"Hello," Andrew said, wanting to be polite.

A man sitting on the sidewalk smiled and looked up. Asleep on his shoulder was a pigeon.

"Grown-ups are sure interesting here," the boy thought.

Behind him, mom stared. Her eyes almost popped out of her head.

"Hello to you too young fellow," the man answered. Then he got up and walked away. The pigeon flew ahead of him.

Andrew's fingers waved, "Goodbye."

"What does 'young fellow' mean?" Andrew asked his mom.

"It means you're a big boy," she answered. "Even if you hold my hand."

Andrew continued to lead the way.

"Let's get you some school clothes," mom said. Their first stop was Margolian's. The Boy's section had steep stairs going into the basement.

Andrew placed his hand inside moms. "So you don't fall," he said.

Squeaking steps began a sort of singsong. "Come this way little boy," they seemed to say.

"Shopping is fun!" Andrew shouted. It felt good acting like an adult. As he tried on new clothes his eyes sparkled. He watched the saleslady wrap their parcels.

A raccoon ran across the counter. And the lady didn't even notice.

Andrew gave his best "Hello" smile. Behind him, mom chewed her nails. And her mouth made funny sounds.

Wait until his friends see his new clothes! The grade one class would say, "Awesome" and "Cool." Their words would fly around the room.

His fingers waved "Goodbye" to the sales lady.

Visiting other stores was also fun. And Andrew saw monkeys climb a tall flagpole right in front of the Toronto Dominion bank.

Three dogs and two cats had a boxing match. Then they had a 'bite-and-chew' squabble. Teeth and fur hurried down the sidewalk.

He was clapping for the cats to win the race. A deer pranced up and down the street. Everyone smiled at the shocked little boy. Andrew was surprised everyone seemed to think everything was fine. Except for mom.

At first he kept saying only "Hello!" and "Goodbye!" But soon he added new words like, "Wow!" and "Yikes!"

All this excitement and repeating those words helped make him tired.

Mom kept ducking and turning around. She didn't want any animals or birds to come too close. "They might bite me," she said.

Just then a chickadee landed on her purse. "Oh my," she gasped.

And when a huge crow tried it, she screamed.

Andrew's shouted, "Cool!" His eyes grew wider at each new sight.

Every store had a different surprise. Shapes danced in store windows. Greeting cards flew around like butterflies. Fur coats seemed to come alive and almost jumped off their hangers.

Andrew's mother was barely able to whisper, "Time to go home."

"Awww," Andrew moaned. Now his fun was over.

His mother could barely walk home, on shaky legs. Her hat was turned backwards. And her sweater dragged on the ground. She was even missing one shoe.

"May I hold your hand?" Andrew's mom asked.

"But, that man said I'm a young man now," Andrew answered.

"Okay smarty pants. It's just in case I fall down," she said.

Andrew held mom's hand tightly as they slowly walked home. She looked all worn out. At home, Andrew helped her to the couch.

It was no surprise to her son she was ready to fall asleep.

And Andrew hurried to ask one question.

"Mom, can we go again tomorrow?"

HURRY UP, PAUL

"Did you clean up your room, yet?" mom asked.

Her voice drifted up the stairs and down the hallway. It came quietly like a thin trail of wood smoke.

Paul was busy typing a letter to his sister, Joanne. He picked a book from the pile beside his chair and threw it under the bed. There, that should sound like I'm cleaning up, he thought.

"YESSS...MOMMM," he answered. His words became a paper airplane and floated downstairs.

He wanted to get this letter done before breakfast. Before school even. And definitely before mom came to check his room.

Paul spotted his blue jeans grass stained from last night's baseball game with Uncle Lawrence. Flying saucer pajamas and yesterday's socks also lay on the floor.

He leaned from his chair and grabbed at a shirt. It was like picking a dandelion from their front lawn. Then he chucked it into shadows under the bed.

Good shot, Paul thought.

"Are you finished yet? I'm coming to check, soon." Mom's words seemed to crawl across the floor and up his back.

Slowly, the boy got up from his chair. Then kneeled and pushed the rest of his mess under the bed. Now his mother couldn't say his room wasn't tidy.

He was quite proud of himself.

Just to make sure everything looked normal, Paul pulled the edge of his blankets lower to hide everything.

Now back to the letter. He wished he could type properly so he could finish quickly. At first, his busy finger poked at the keys. Then they traveled faster and faster.

His old teddy bear watched from the dresser.

A crow peeked through the open window.

Sheeba lay at Paul's feet, licking his huge doggy toes.

His cat Midnight purred happily on top of the bed.

"I suppose you just threw everything under the bed?" This time, mom's questioning voice fired like an arrow down the hallway.

Paul tried to ignore the truth. Typing fingers speeded along. Sheeba looked up, amazed at the way his master could move when he wanted.

"I suppose you put your fishing gear under the bed too," mom said.

Just then, a strange noise came from that location. Paul bent down and saw his green tackle box and fishing rod. How did they get there?

"If I go and check, I'll probably find your Lego and Chess games there too," mom called.

Paul was on his knees and simply stared. "Oh, no" he said as black and white plastic pawns and knights came from a corner of his room. And hid under his clothes

The teddy bear blinked.

"What if I come in and find your winter boots there, too. Huh? And skis and your sleeping bag?" Each time mom mentioned an item they came from a corner of the room and added them to the pile.

Paul's bed began to lift since there wasn't enough space to keep everything underneath. Sheeba paced the floor knowing her master was frantic about something.

The Crow was now joined on the window - sill by a Sparrow and Blue Jay. Their beaks opened wide in amazement.

"What about your running shoes? And Sunday School shirt and pants? Or those plane models from your birthday? I suppose they're under the bed too."

At that moment, his closet door opened and everything mentioned clattered along the floor. They followed as if in a parade heading for the bed.

Every shape, size and color belonging to him, rolled, twisted and scratched across the floor.

As the pile grew, the bed lifted even higher.

The cat meowed and jumped from the swaying bed. It was getting to be a long way to the floor now. Paul tried to ignore what was happening.

His fingers flew across the computer keys. "Have to finish this letter... have to finish this letter," he kept saying.

Now he heard mom's footsteps. "Oh, no." The computer felt his busy fingers dance across the keys. Finally the letter was done.

Paul jumped from his chair and began to pull clothes from under the bed. He gathered them in his arms as he ran to the closet.

The thump of his mother's feet moved as if in slow motion.

Suddenly Paul had lots of help. The crow flew onto the floor and began to pull at the pile. Then the sparrow and his cat Midnight helped. Even the usually barking Sheeba did her share.

Quick dashes were made from closet to bed and back again.

Dog toes clicked, and bird feathers flew. Cat meows added to the excitement. Finally, everything was placed neatly, the way mom liked.

"Well, I must say your room is a pleasant surprise," she said suddenly from the doorway. Her smile was like maple syrup on pancakes.

The teddy bear stopped blinking.

Sheeba peeked from beneath a paw.

Midnight purred happily once again.

Crow, Sparrow and Blue Jay had nothing to do, so they flew away.

And Paul finished reading his last sentence to his sister. "Nothing much happening here," it said.

Love, from brother Paul.

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A FRIEND, FOREVER

Colin came awake to the sound of groaning. His silver alarm clock showed 1 AM, Christmas morning!

He wondered what was making that noise.

The cold wooden floor sent shivers along his spine. And daddy's snores followed him downstairs.

He was silent as a coyote. Six-year old boys were supposed to be in bed this time of day.

Down, down old wooden stairs. Noisy creaking followed each step. Colin heard something that sounded like, "HELLLP!" It was a voice coming from the living room.

Someone must be in trouble. Should he dial 911 for help? Maybe Colin should check first. The large Christmas tree was silent in the corner.

It had been fun placing lights and decorations. Greeting cards hung from lines of ribbon along the wall.

“Yikes,” Colin whispered. Something moved between the stockings hung on the fireplace!

Coming closer he saw two dangling legs. The moon shone like a flashlight through the window. It showed two shiny black boots. And Colin was sure he also heard hooves stamping on the roof.

Is that Santa stuck in our chimney? The boy wondered.

“HELLPPP MEEE,” said a voice. “Pull me down.”

Colin held onto one boot and pulled. No luck. He tried the other foot. No luck. “I’m going to get help,” Colin said.

“Try again,” the voice pleaded. It was as if the chimney was speaking.

“Are you really Santa?” the boy dared to ask.

“YESSS. Please, hurry up.”

Now Colin put his young muscles to work. He wrapped both arms around one boot and hung on.

Suddenly, a tearing sound came as the whole sole landed with a thump. The same thing happened to the second one. “Oh...Oh,” Colin said as he lay sprawled on the floor.

Guess who fell and landed beside him?

“Ho. Ho. Ho,” was a familiar sound. “You’re a strong young fellow.” A famous bearded face with red cheeks smiled at Colin.

“You are Santa!” his young voice shouted.

“Yes, little boy. And you know why I’m here.” Then, the man in his bright red suit reached up and pulled a bag of toys from the fireplace.

He carefully placed presents under the tree. “Yours are here too,” he said with a wink.

The boy didn’t dare move. This was too much.

“Would you help me with a problem?” Santa quietly asked. I don’t have any decent boots. Mine are now torn.”

“I’ll get a pair of daddy’s,” Colin answered. “Come with me upstairs and try some on.”

“Oh no. I can’t be seen in my stocking feet,” Santa answered. “Go ahead and bring me down a pair.”

Several of Santa’s toes poked through his socks.

Colin tiptoed silently into his parent’s room. This pair should do, he thought.

No one woke up when one shoe clattered down the steps.

“These are brown,” Santa said. “I need black.”

Colin did not have a flashlight to see in the dark room. This time he brought daddy’s slippers.

Finally he found a pair of black leather shoes. But, they were too tight for Santa.

Colin’s cat was confused. His master kept going up and down the stairs.

Whiskers wished Colin would hurry back to bed.

The boy was sorry he had torn Santa's boots. Then, he had an idea. He rushed downstairs into his daddy's workshop. Aha, duct tape and model black paint should fix Santa's boots.

And it did.

While Colin was busy, so was Santa. The boy's eyes could barely stop staring at the tree. Presents of all shapes and sizes lay piled up.

"Did you really get my Christmas list?" Colin shyly asked.

"HO! HO! HO! I sure did," Santa answered.

"Did you bring me a Nintendo 64? And a Lego motorized motorcycle?" he asked.

"And a Game Boy and a Snowboard?" The boy's words poured from his mouth.

"Not so fast," jolly St. Nick answered. "I said I received your list, that's all. You'll find out later, after you get back into bed. Now I have to go. Boys and girls all over the world are waiting."

"Don't forget the carrots for your reindeer. Not even the little sack of peanut butter cookies. You only ate one," Colin said.

Santa patted his tummy, then looked down at the little boy. "You'll always be my special friend," he said.

"Forever," the boy answered.

"Now give me a push up the chimney."

Santa's black boots looked good as new. Duct tape kept the soles attached to the leather boot. Dad's black model paint was a perfect match.

“Ho, Ho, Ho” sounds floated down the chimney. Soon, the sounds of Reindeer hoofs dashed across the roof. And leaped into the sky.

“Bye Santa,” was more than a whisper from a little boy. It was a promise to always be a good boy.

Quickly as a reindeer Colin rushed up the stairs. He charged past mommy and daddy’s room. Then he dived into bed, landing right beside Whiskers.

Colin couldn’t wait to open up all of his presents.

It was already the best Christmas ever!

MOM SAID, NO

John loves to climb and tumble on the ground.

Today he hurt himself climbing a tree. Tears running down his cheek quickly became a flood. It was hard being a brave six year old.

"Mom!" he cried. It really hurt.

"What?" she asked.

"I hurt myself."

Then her arms surrounded him like a cuddly bear.

She kissed away his sore feelings, then rushed to get a band-aid. John loved the attention mom gave him.

"Did you climb the tree again?" she asked. "The one back of the shed?" Eyebrows turned into question marks.

"You're not supposed to climb that tree anymore."

"Should he tell the truth? A tiny voice inside his head yelled out, "Yes!" And John did tell the truth.

"Remember what I said for you to do?" mom asked.

"I'm not supposed to try and climb that maple tree anymore," he whispered.

"That's right dear," mom replied. "You fall down too many times. And I worry about you."

"But I want to learn how to do it right," he said. "Will you show me mom?"

Mom said, "No."

Later she watched as her son played with his friends in the backyard. He wrestled and ran around and seemed to enjoy himself.

His mom saw how careful he was, about not playing too roughly. He also patiently waited for his turn on the swing.

She also remembered John often helped Mrs. Nelson carry her garbage to the compost bin.

She saw he didn't climb the tree anymore, even though other children did. She must check the board ladder to see how strong it was.

John already knew it was, because he helped build it. The wood steps disappeared all the way up the tree.

Except at the top there was a missing space before the tallest limb.

It was the highest one and no one dared go that far. But, the children still had fun climbing up and down the remaining rungs.

Mom watched John as he stood, looking up at his friends. It was pleasing to see he still followed her instructions.

She imagined how much John wished she'd change her mind. She could almost hear the thought building inside him.

It must be hard watching the others act as monkeys, moving from limb to limb.

Mom sure loved her son. Was she worrying too much?

Suddenly she decided to do a foolish thing.

Or perhaps it was just plain silly. She rushed to her room and dressed up in her outside work clothes.

That meant old jacket and jeans, and worn sneakers.

Then she put on her favorite T-shirt, white with yellow paint streaks. It was bright, colorful and cheerful like the sun.

She decided to show her young son she too knew how to have fun.

She peeked through the window and noticed everyone still there.

John asked, "Mom? Where are you going?"

She didn't answer as she walked through the backyard past the amazed children.

They weren't used to having an adult coming to play with them.

She walked directly to the tall tree and looked straight up.

Was his mom going to climb the tree? John wondered.

First she tested the climbing-down rope.

Then she checked the walking-up boards. Everything seemed good and strong, especially the board ladder that went up and up.

His mouth dropped as she began to climb. Soon, one foot followed the other. Up and up she went right to the top.

Right now, John was very proud of his mom. As the children watched, their eyes almost popped out.

Soon she reached the last rung.

Then carefully she climbed a few more steps until she sat on the largest and tallest limb. This was almost like climbing a mountain.

After she comfortably settled in like a cat, she called down. "John. Come on up."

And he did.

When they were both safely settled on the scary limb his mom smiled. John was quite happy being at the top, for the very first time.

Mother and son stared down into many wide-open mouths. They could almost count everyone's teeth.

"Mom. When you're not here, may I still come up?" John quietly asked.

She looked back at her son.

His arms were brown and strong. His eyes were bright and full of questions. Freckles covered his face like brown snowflakes.

His huge smile already knew the answer.

Mom said, "Yes."

* * *

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