

FOR
My
GRANDCHILDREN



ROY KEY

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Apartment K4
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FOR MY GRANDCHILDREN

Dear Grandchildren,

Over the years grandparents have stored up a lot of stuff, and one of the things they've packed away in big bundles is love.

They like to give it away... to their children, their friends, their neighbors, other grandparents, and people who never had the joy of having grandchildren.

Grandma and I feel mighty blessed to have eight marvelous grandchildren like you. All so lovely, brilliant, with so much promise for helping leave the world better than you found it.

Grandparents can't take the place of parents, but they can try to make a place of their own by taking time, by listening, and by telling stories.

Often when parents are busy working hard to make a living, grandparents can tell the stories of the family... who it is, where it came from, the battles it has fought, the dreams it has held and that have held it together.

They can also tell stories of the nation and Church, the dreams that brought us to being, the faith by which we live, and so pass along each one's heritage. And finally they can lift up the grandchildren in prayer.

This little book won't try all that. Stories of the family and church are told elsewhere. But this will be a fresh adventure. And one thing sure, it will come to you packed full of love.

Therefore, I dedicate it to:

Dawn	Ryan
David	Ashley
Jamie	Christina
Jill	Annika

A few of you may be too sophisticated for these tales. A few of you may not be sophisticated enough. I leave it to each to decide which is which. In time, though, I hope that you may all find a challenge in them somewhere.

June 30, 1989

*In lots of hope and love,
Granddaddy Key*

Since first printing these stories in 1993 two grandsons, two great granddaughters and a great grandson have come to bless us. Their names, therefore, are happily added to the list:

Sean	Sydney
Matthew	Katie
Caleb	

1

HAVE FUN!

A little boy who played hard all day went to bed with a smile. And on his lips, his two-word childish creed, “Fun tomorrow!”

I don’t want you to grow up thinking only of yourself, your main aim in life “having fun.” But, I do want you to look forward to tomorrow, to believe that the future will be good, instead of bad. For, you see, it will be God’s tomorrow-the future in God’s loving hands.

I want you to find out the sort of “tomorrow” God wants and intends, so you can work hard and play hard to make that “tomorrow” real. Then, when you go to sleep, no matter your age, you can smile and say with assurance, “Fun tomorrow!”

Here’s a little secret just for us. Grandma and I were visiting Ryan and Christina, and Ryan, at age 7, showed us some stories he had written. In my zeal to encourage him to continue writing, I promised to write a story for him. Here it is. I hope that “Tuffy” can remind us of the trouble acting as a “show-off” can bring.

TUFFY- THE SHOW-OFF SQUIRREL



In an oak tree far away in California lived a squirrel who was certain he should be the main attraction in a circus. Other squirrels called him "Tuffy," because he always acted real tough when either the other squirrels or people so much as casually watched.

Tuffy's tree home was on a hill in Novato, an oak that grew in the backyard of a family of Keys. He liked his home, because its limbs stretched out over a part of the Key house on Cabro Court. He could leap up on the roof, run over and peer down through the skylights and see sights most squirrels never saw. What tall tales he told the wide-eyed creatures who crowded round to hear what he had found out each day.

The tree, also, spread over the new deck where a boy (Ryan) and his sister (Christina) liked to play. Often when Tuffy saw himself as a brave high wire acrobat, performing before thousands of Ryans and Christinas, he raced down a limb somersaulted in the air and came down on the picnic table. Then he bounded upward, caught a higher limb on the tree, did a double flip and landed over on the play house.

As Ryan and Christina rode the tricycle on the deck, pulled their wagon, or helped their mother sweep off the leaves, Tuffy, at least once a day, performed for them his most-daring feat. Up the tree he ran to its peak. Letting go of the top limb, he flipped in mid-air, caught the next, then the next, and next, until Ryan and Christina were sure he would fall on the deck at their feet.

Yet, as Tuffy caught the bottom limb, he arched his back, kicked hard with his hind legs, sprang back up to the last branch and raced wildly up the tree again, tail held high, eyes burning with excitement. Then, he leaped from the top limb and somehow made his way down through leaves and branches, ignoring all the limbs between, and caught the last one available before hitting the deck.

One day as Tuffy warmed to his act, the children called their parents, Marc and Jan. "He's going to do it again now! Come quickly and look!" With the entire Key family looking on, Tuffy decided it was time for a new and even tougher act. The family cat had walked up on the deck, too, a fierce challenge to the dare-devil squirrel.

Once as Tuffy peeped through the window and on the television caught a glimpse of bare-backed steer riding at the rodeo, he thought "Now, that's a truly tough act!" and at the time he wondered, "How can I ever get that into my performance?" Suddenly, he knew!

Down the limbs he came, flipping in mid-air between them. Everybody, including the cat, watched in wonder. Right down on the deck banister Tuffy dropped, ran its length, leaped back into the tree, somersaulted and landed on the picnic table, then hit the deck three feet in front of the cat, stuck out his tongue, and hurtled swiftly away up on the play house and back into the tree.

The surprised cat didn't move a muscle. "Ah," thought Tuffy, "Now is the time." Up the tree he dashed and ran out on the bottom limb, flipped over twice and landed squarely on the cat's back. This time the cat was even more surprised, but not transfixed. With its back arched higher than any horse or steer could ever manage, this angry cat leaped straight up, its scream fairly deafening Tuffy.

Tuffy's turn to be shocked now by the bucking, screeching cat, he for a split second released his grip. After that he never knew exactly what happened. The other squirrels told him that he went hurtling up into the air in his familiar form, but landed smack on his head, and immediately all the lights went out.

There he lay spread-eagled on the deck, still as a kayoed fighter on his face in the ring. At that beautiful sight, the cat pounced on him. Immediately four Keys sprang to his rescue, bursting the dream bubble of a cat who was sure she would that night have squirrel for dinner... rare.

When Tuffy came to, he was lying on a soft cloth on the picnic table, his face being bathed with cold water. Not stopping to dry off or say one word of thanks, he flipped over, made a leap for the nearest tree branch, and scurried as fast as he could to the very top, certain to keep his eye on the cat, lest it decide to come right along after him.

Tuffy still plays in the oak tree on Cabro Court, leaps about on the picnic table, playhouse, and deck railing. He races across the roof of the house and peers through the skylights now and then. Whenever the crowd is big enough to suit him, he does his acrobatic leaps and somersaults. However, the other squirrels say that he has slowed down a bit since he took that blow to the head.

For sure, he never fails to keep an eye on the cat when she's about. He's not at all certain she's forgotten that wild rodeo barebacked ride. She need not worry, though. Tuffy has concluded that this stunt is just not his style.

Not only that, but tough as he is, Tuffy has never dared watch television again.

1/18/89

*In hopeful love,
Granddaddy*

MY PRAYER

O Lord, thank You for our grandchildren. You have made us rich by this precious gift. Help us now to let You love them through us.

Let us enjoy life to the full, so that the contagion of our joy may infect each child. Make our faces shine with the radiance of Your tomorrow glimpsed today.

Grant that we and they may learn to take You more seriously and ourselves less so. Keep us from primping in front of every store window and taking bows before every crowd. Help us to remember that life is not one big parade.

But make us to know that Yours is a good creation, to be enjoyed, protected and nourished. Lead these children to have fun because they have faith. To laugh at their own pretense. To learn from their own mistakes. To discover that neither strength nor fame is born of bluster.

In the Name of One who is Real,
Amen.

2

TRUST JESUS

Remember the little girl who was taken upstairs to bed and could-not go to sleep. Her mother said to her, “Don’t you know that God is with you,” and she answered, “Yes, but I want somebody with a skin face!”

God cares for us all and does not want to lose a single one, either through someone’s carelessness or our own death. So, the Almighty has stooped to us in Jesus to be with us in our darkness and save us from our foes and fears.

He was “the Lamb of God” who laid down his life for us. He is also “the Lion” who defeats all the powers arrayed against us. Here is a hard lesson to learn, but it is vital that we do: God’s self-giving love, God’s wounded love, wins the victory over all brute force.

If we would truly be God’s children, sharing in His self-giving spirit, we must risk hurt and disappointment for the sake of saving others. There is available to us an enemy-transforming love that needs to seize and hold us until we, like magnets, draw to us those enemies that then become our friends... God’s and ours.

We are small and weak in physical power, but in the Spirit of Jesus we can face the powers of darkness and come out victorious. He is our Savior in life... and in death.

THE DRAGON AND THE LAMB

In the land of Pastoria among the Golden Mountains was the most beautiful forest in the world. It was perfect...except for one thing.

Deep in the forest was a damp, dark den. From it came a foul odor that fell on everything for miles around, making it hard for either animals or trees to breathe. It is said that at times in the dead of night a rumbling came from the den, that a fiery glow appeared, and a sulfur flame like a giant lizard tongue, shot out into the stifling air, singeing every brave blade of grass or struggling leaf that dared grow close to the dragon's den.

"Dagon" was the dragon's name, and the very sound of it struck fear into the heart of every animal. Around evening campfires stories were told of old days when animals



dared to venture far into the Golden Mountains, where Dagon snatched them from the trails and killed them everyone.

Often when the moon was dark, Dagon stole from his den to lurk by the edge of the meadow, where the animals came to graze and drink from the lazy, crystal waters. There he fell with fury on the unsuspecting innocents.

Lately the dragon had crept closer and closer to the homes and shelters of smaller forest creatures. In the morning foul slime clung to the stones over which his greenish thick-scaled stomach slug-like dragged. Each night, it seemed, a cry went up, and everyone knew that, viciously, fatally, Dagon had struck again. In desperation the animals called a meeting, as far away as possible from the dreadful den.



The word went out through the forest to come to the gathering. "Bounce" the debonair bunny, hopped away to carry the news. "Muffy," the tiny gray mouse, scurried off to tell. "Muzzle" the mole waddled away to help. "Ozzie," the wise old owl, sailed out in the opposite direction. But, it was "Ruffles" the raven who flew fastest and farthest with the invitation.

The meeting began in disarray, confusion everywhere, with everybody jabbering at once. "Shh," cautioned Ozzie. "We dare not make so great a noise that Dagon hears and comes to kill us all." "We've got to find a way to stop Dagon!" they all cried over and over. "But, how?" Ozzie asked, and no one had a plan.

Then, Muzzle spoke up. "We'll burrow under his den and hollow out a cavern so deep and wide that when he stomps his feet and roars, he'll break through and be killed by the fall." "How stupid!" cawed Ruffles. It would take a thousand years to dig a cavern that big. I think we should poison the water hole near the den."

That sounded good to most, till Ozzie asked, "What about the little creatures that must steal up there for a drink? We'd kill all of them, too." Bounce began to jump up and down and cry, "There's no hope. We're all doomed!" Ozzie spoke up once more, "This calls for great wisdom. Someone must simply go to Dagon and reason with him. We must persuade him that it is better for us all to live in peace."

There was a long silence while everybody waited for a volunteer. Each had a reason why he or she couldn't go. After awhile came a small voice from the back, "I'll go." They turned to see a lamb making his way to the front of the group. "Leo," said Ozzie. "You have a big name, but you are a little lamb."

The hens cackled. The hyenas laughed. The frogs croaked. The giraffes snorted. The donkeys brayed. "You won't make one mouthful for Dagon," said Muzzle. "You'd be crushed," added Ruffles, "by the tip of his tail." Muffy squeaked, "Be smart, and forget it. You might in time grow up to be, at least, half a mouthful." The meeting ended with no official plan.



The next morning Leo began winding his way over the Golden Mountains toward Dagon's den. Tiny hooves carried him slowly along craggy paths skirting deep, hungry gorges and hugging high stone walls. On the third day the earth began to rumble, and a voice thundered, "Who dares come near Dagon's den? Speak now, and I will be merciful and swiftly end your life."

Leo spoke, "All the animals live in fear of being mangled or killed. We want to talk with you about our treatment and how we may all live in peace." "You young upstart!" the dragon roared. "You question me!?!? Now I *am* mad! No more Mr. Nice Guy." With that he hurled himself at Leo, crushed him, and flung his limp body into the charred brush beyond the den.

Ruffles, watching at a distance, now horrified, flew back with the awful news that the lamb was dead. The animals all lost hope, and many of them wept through the night.

At dawn Muffy sat alone, her eyes wet and red. "What's wrong, little friend?" a gentle voice behind her asked. "Have you not heard the terrible news?" she answered. "Leo the lamb went to talk to Dagon the dragon and was brutally murdered." Once more she burst into tears.

"Don't cry, little one," the soft voice said. "I will take care of it." She looked up to see the most beautiful creature she had ever seen. It looked like a lamb, only it was different. S-o-o-o much bigger.



Bigger even than any ordinary lion. Bigger than the dragon. Its fur shone like gold in the morning sun, and there was about it an awesome majesty and strength.

"You're alive!" Muffy cried. "I must run tell everyone!" Motioning for silence, the kingly creature said, "Climb upon my back." Like the wind it took off toward Dagon's den. At the door he paused but an instant for Muffy to dismount. Then he bounded inside and did a most un-lamb-like thing. He roared!

Sounds of blows and thuds shook the earth, echoing across the forest. A scream split the air. Then silence. Muffy quaked and waited. From the den came the lamb-that-looked-like-a-lion-king, with more brilliance and majesty than before. The beginning of a golden mane wreathed his head like a crown. Then he spoke quietly, "The evil dragon is no more. Dagon is dead."

We do not know the end of the story, but it is said that Muffy scurried back to the group and told the wondrous tale of the dragon's death. It was hard to believe, but the animals found that they could live together without fear. It is said that the terrible stench from the distant den began to fade, and that at length violets lifted timid heads beside its door.

Some say that Leo never came back. Yet, at times when the animals are together, especially when they are very happy or terribly afraid, they seem to see the flashing of a golden mane and hear a gentle whisper that somehow says, "All is well." Almost at the same instant they hear the echo of a distant thud that sounds like a dragon's fall.

11/17/89

*With love, in hope,
Granddaddy*

MY PRAYER

God of life and death, our Father who will not let us go, thank You for these precious ones who follow us in the family and in the faith. Press close to them in Jesus that they may know Your comforting, empowering presence in the darkness and the light.

Fill them with that love (we tremble to ask it) that leads them to give themselves for others. And allow both us and them to see that Your power is made perfect in weakness, and Your love is made full in the offering of self.

Lure us with a Cross that these children also see, and love our World into glory.

Through Christ our Lord,

Amen.

3 HURRY TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR

Dear Grandchildren,

There's a fire raging out in our world and some foolish notions about what to do in the midst of it. There are those who say, "Ignore it. Sooner or later it's going to get us all, anyway." "You only go around once, so grab all the gusto that you can." "The big question is: 'What's in it for me?!'" "Be sure and look out for number 1!"

One thing is certain: self-centeredness will insure your destruction. God has created us so that we need one another for meaningful companionship and for sheer survival. Among humans "the lone wolf" is destined :for extinction.

I pray for you a better, safer world. But, I know that it can come only as you bundle your energies and together hurl them in that direction.

My hope is that you will clearly see that God is luring us, tugging us, pushing us toward one grown-up Family where we can as one share in and enjoy the Great Creative Adventure.

*Yours in the " magnificent obsession
Granddaddy*



THE PHOENIX AND THE FIRE

A tired traveler made his way into the clearing where the last village lay at the edge of the Dark Forest. One look at him showed that he had been gone for months. His hair hung in tangles about his shoulders, and a bushy beard covered his face till he would have been unrecognizable, even if the local folks had known him.

He was a stranger, though, and no one could even guess how he got into the forest without coming through this last little outpost of theirs. The fact is that no one had crept into the woods more than 30 yards in the last 60 years. It was too dark and dangerous! Old-timers around evening camp fires told fearsome tales of the disappearance of relatives, friends and travelers who two generations ago dared venture among those huge, black trees.

Now appeared a stranger who entered the forest no one knows where and came out unharmed no one knows how, telling an incredible tale of what he has seen in that awesome place.

The traveler's pack mule, unmoving, head drooped, stood outside the village cafe. Whatever supplies it carried into the forest were gone, and he had simply served as companion to the traveler for the last three days. Both man and beast survived on an occasional drink from a puddle or brook, berries, roots, and lazy slugs. Man and beast seemed starved for food and folks.

Local villagers listened to a strange tale with growing suspicion, tossing glances from one to another at almost every sentence. Not appearing to notice, the stranger told his tale.

"No matter how dangerous it was, I decided that I would explore the Dark Forest. Loading my pack mule with supplies to last 90 days, I set out. I took a rifle and 3 dozen boxes of bullets, a hunting knife, and a blow gun, with a more-than-ample supply of poison darts, feeling as well-prepared as one could.

"As I got deep into the woods, where the sunlight could not break through the trees, I was attacked on every side. Snakes tried to strike through my heavy boots. Furry things hurled themselves against my back and breast. Flying creatures batted me about the head and face. Roaring beasts drew ever nearer. Then began the trumpeting sounds and the shaking of the earth beneath my feet..

"I could not begin to see how to aim either a rifle or a dart gun. Seizing my blade, I slashed with it until my arm ached. If ever I hit anything, I never knew it. Fear so rose in my heart that I tried to run back the way I came. By this time, however, I was completely turned around and must have plunged only deeper into the jungle forest. Losing count of the days, I stumbled on in darkness, and in confusion lost most of my supplies.

"At last, paralyzed by panic, I saw a distant glow deep in the forest. Rapidly it approached, every moment growing brighter. When hot winds struck my face, I knew that the Dark Forest was on fire. At last I could see. The fierce blaze illumined dark recesses that for over 100 years had not known light.

"From a blazing giant nest above my head came the stir of heavy wings, and there rose from that huge branch home the most-beautiful bird I have ever seen. For a moment I could not believe my eyes, and then I remembered the ancient legends of the Phoenix.

"This must be it!" I cried hoarsely, 'the Phoenix!' for nothing else could be born of that fire. But, my bewilderment was just beginning. Above the roar of the wind and flame I heard the thunder of stampeding animals. Forest creatures running for their lives, heading directly toward me.

"Quickly I crouched behind an enormous tree and waited for the rush to pass on either side. Even so, I was terribly afraid, for the animals were not running in orderly fashion. Rather, they were rushing, large ones blindly on and smaller ones in crisscross pattern, trying to escape the certain death of a crush beneath massive hooves and feet.

"Then, came the most-piercing cry I have ever heard, so shrill as to drown out all other noise and bring every panic-stricken creature to a dead halt. It was the Phoenix, growing to mammoth size, and dropping down about 9 feet off the ground. Its majestic purple and gold glowed with a sheen more brilliant than the fiercest flame. Every living creature had quickly to close its eyes and then only slowly open them for a squint.

"Listen to me!" the Phoenix called, 'if you want to escape the fire alive. There is no way you can outrun this blaze, not even the swiftest of you, without help. I can help you, and I will, if you follow my instructions. There is no time for silly wars and efforts to overpower one another. Only if you help one another is there hope. I will not ask you for a show of paws and wings. I will simply tell you what to do. Those of you who want to go on playing war games can die in the midst of them.

"I can't stop the fire, but I can slow it for you. First, though, I want the largest, swiftest of you to take the smaller, slower ones upon your backs. Do it now!" the majestic creature called. Then unfolded the strangest sight I have ever seen. Squirrels leaped on lions' backs. Groundhogs clambered up the sides of bears. Leopards lay down for turtles, zebras for snakes, and on and on. Caterpillars mounted elephants, along with cats and dogs and gerbils. Butterflies fluttered toward hawks, owls and eagles, the heat of the fire speeding their flight.

"Then came the Phoenix's command, 'Eagles, hawks, birds of prey, come to the front immediately! You will lead the group through this inferno. I must move behind you, grow to my greatest size and begin to beat my wings backward in order to slow the blaze. As it approaches, I will retreat before it, right behind you, fanning all the while. It will be dark in front, and the keen-sighted among you must guide the company. Don't run beyond them, or you'll be lost in the dark and stray over to the side where later the fire will reach you.

"The Phoenix saw me, but gave no special orders, so I got in the company of the animals and moved with them at their pace. In this way we all escaped the deadly fire. At the edge of the forest, we stopped, where the animals had to decide whether they would go back to fighting one another or continue to work together in the new harmonious way that had just saved their lives.

"As I left the gathering, I heard the Phoenix say, 'You see now how you can live. The decision is yours.' I turned back into the forest to follow the burned path through it, leaving them to discuss the merits of living and working together. I didn't know their final decision. but I knew my own. I must come out of the forest to tell what I saw and heard. For, in a fiery burst of light my own darkness vanished. I saw as never before the way life can work.

"Never yet have I had a place I could call 'home,' and I do not know if I'm welcome here or any place I've been before. After I leave here, though, I'm going back through the Dark Forest to tell my story to the folks over there. I guess what I'd like to know from you is whether you want someone like me around. If so, I will return. If not, I'll find out if the folks on the other side are any more open. Should my story be too strange for you or them, I'll just keep moving.

"Even in the few days since the fire the forest has again begun to show signs of life. I keep wondering what the animals decided. Could it be that if people can't learn to live together, the forest creatures can lead us? Maybe, we just don't see the fire. If only the Phoenix could come to us..."

2/14/90

*With love and in hope,
Granddaddy*

MY PRAYER

Lord God, Maker of "all creatures great and small," Source of all loving care, teach us to care for one another. To seize the moment to help one another in the joys, the tragedies, the varied challenges of life.

Give to my grandchildren, and all grandchildren everywhere, eyes to see those needs strewn all around them, and hearts quick to beat themselves out in deeds of mercy. May they find the joy of life that comes only in serving.

In the Name of Him who came
not to be served, but to serve,
Amen,

4 "CARE FOR IT"

Dear Grandchildren,

We are all together travelers on this tiny spaceship called "Earth," It's a short trip, and we'd like it to be meaningful. Not comfortable. Rather, Creative and Joyous.

That means we must get along... with one another... and creation. Most of our trouble comes from not getting along. Not making glad peace. Not caring and sharing.

When God introduced "Adam" to his lovely world, he was told, "Work it and take care of it." We are co-creators, made to "work" and to "care." For sharing the Creative Adventure. We're joy-full when we have work worth doing and those whom we love and who love us.

We inherited a "good" creation, but in our greed have made it less than that. We're now trying to wake up and save our little spaceship home. I hope you play a significant part in the venture.

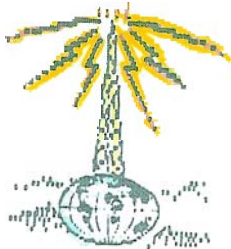
Once knights in gleaming armor mounted on spirited steeds rode out to fight for great causes. Now they do it in lab coats, business suits and overalls. You'll choose your dress. but your task is waiting... if you can see it.

*Yours for a keen eyesight,
Granddaddy*

THE PHANTOM RIDER AND THE FOUR PRINCESSES

Once upon a world there was a planet called "*Ge*" [pronounced "Gay"] It floated effortlessly in space, swinging like a giant soccer ball in the dark blue ocean of air. *Ge* was never still, not for a moment, but turned over every 24 hours and made a wide, wide circle around a fiery ball of shining light every 365 1/4 times it turned over. It was an unbelievable sight for any interplanetary creature to behold.

Travelers through the stratosphere took back to wondering Venus or Neptune-bound souls strange tales about miraculous transformations that took place on *Ge* changes unheard of on any other planet of which they knew.



Their scientists detailed complicated theories of incredible magnetic forces, varying distances between *Ge* and the fiery ball of shining light, speed of *Ge*'s rotation, presence of undreamed of elements, along with countless combinations unheard of before. Yet, somehow it all never seemed to explain the mystery.

Poets, artists -- those who tried to peer beneath planetary crust, simply told stories. Some called them "myths," which meant that the stories always pointed beyond themselves to the mystery. While many claimed that all the "myths" were false, a few insisted that they were like peanuts. If you argue that peanuts are simply shells, then you miss the inner gift waiting for you when the shells are broken.

Anyway, the stories centered around a phantom rider and 4 lovely princesses. They were all sleeping beauties, except for a quarter of the year when they were radiantly alive, some skipping and dancing everywhere. As for the phantom rider, no one ever saw his face. They were sure that it was a strong, exquisitely molded, smiling face; yet, not a soul could say that s/he ever caught a glimpse of it.

Rider had thrown around his shoulders a luminous cloak of what at times appeared to be silver, at other times gold, still at other times a wispy vapor through which stole a crimson glow.

Nor could the story tellers agree on the rider's method of shooting through the air. Some said he rode the winds, seized the tails of tornadoes, tied them together and grasped them as reins. They said you could catch only glimpses of him moving through storms, leaping over rainbows, and darting behind mountainous clouds.

Others claimed he rode a white stallion, a horse with mane flowing, nostrils flaring, its head stretching over the Great Lakes and its tail shadowing the Continental Divide. Half-visible for a split second, it was then gone moving at the speed of light divided by 3.

A few interplanetary observers claimed that Rider sped through the skies on a super supersonic spaceship, something foreshadowed in "Star Wars." Not that they ever took a picture of it, or could in fact make a drawing of it. They simply claimed that there is no other way for him to get around and carry out his mission.

So, what was the mission? The story goes that Rider had in his wardrobe four masks: one bright green, one deep green and mellow yellow, one translucent orange flecked with red and brown, and one snow white. Four times a year he donned one of his masks, soared around *Ge*, found the palace of a lovely princess, kissed her awake, and left her a basket filled with beauty. Then in a flash he was gone.

When he wore his bright green mask, he landed at the castle flying a flag with the king's coat of arms on a background of fresh, shining green. There he left a basket of crocuses, hyacinths, daffodils, tulips, redbud and dogwood blossoms, tender mosses, tiny grasses, tomato plants, orange and apple blossom perfumes, gentle showers, and cool but warming nights.



As he kissed the princess, she stretched sleepily and slowly opened her eyes. At once Rider was away, leaving her with a faint remembrance of sweet dreams and the sense that she must get up and out into the open with her basket. Once outside, she laughed and skipped and tossed to the winds her bundles of beauty. For twelve weeks she scattered life everywhere -- and youth and joy and hope.

It was the same with each of the princesses. When Rider wore his deep green and mellow yellow mask, he swooped down on the castle whose coat of arms was carried on a flag of deep green and mellow yellow hues. He kissed the sleeping beauty, left his basket, and swished away.

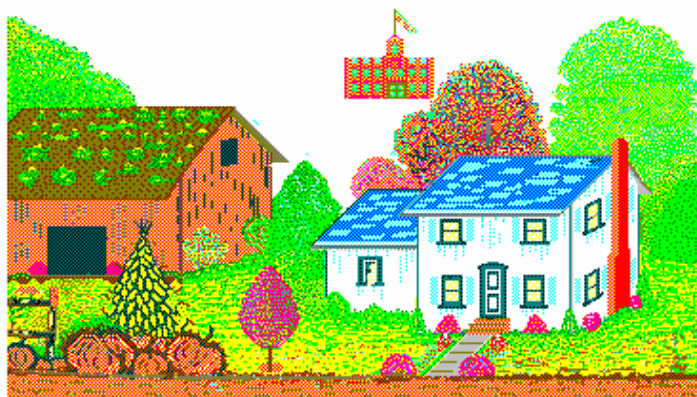
This time it was a basket of roses in bloom, spangled swatches of green corn and bearded wheat, happy sounds of calves and goats frolicking in the sun, fishing lures, vacation maps, lazy tunes, swimming suits, golf balls, against the backdrop of a dazzling display of fireworks in claps of thunder and sheets of lightning.



While the first princess was hardly more than a child, the second was a fully-formed young woman, whose maturity gave her beauty a dignity that left one breathless as she swept by.

Her basket was full of sun and shade, ripening fruits and grains, the laughter of children at play, the songs of workers in field and grateful hearts at home in prayer. Hers was a slower, more graceful pace and a warmer, more generous hand. She was loved as a wife and mother.

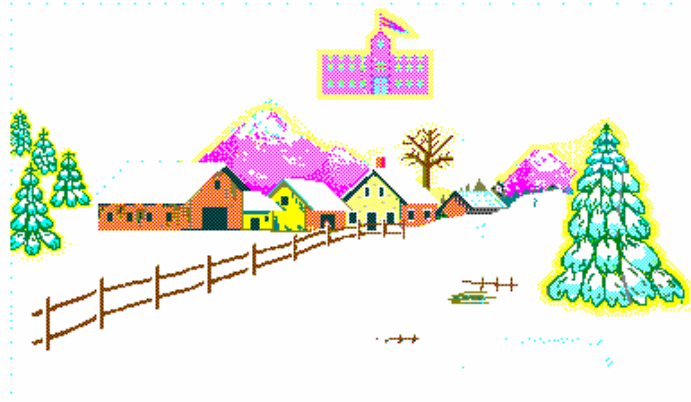
After twelve weeks Rider again appeared out of nowhere wearing his mask of translucent orange flecked with red and brown. As he kissed awake the third sleeping beauty, her opening eyes reflected both the light of youth and wisdom of age. Her bearing was queenly, her voice soft and musical, like the sound of a distant choir at twilight.



She did not skip through the meadow, but swept effortlessly across golden fields, over wagons of cotton and corn winding along country roads, over stores with pumpkins outside and scarves and mittens within. Her basket was filled with hickory nuts and fresh cider, dried apricots, apple butter and pumpkin bread, the sound of school bells on crisp mornings, hoar frost shimmering on honeysuckle, and puffs of quick breaths on a million playgrounds.

People reached out to her, though they saw her but dimly, as she glided by. They clutched her skirts, straining to hold her back. Though in fact they saw only her dress, many said her beauty surpassed all the others! and they loved her most of all.

Too soon twelve weeks more hurried past. and Rider leaped astride his steed (or, was into his spacecraft?) and streaked through the stratosphere. At the castle flying the king's crest on the snow white flag he halted and strode into the chamber where the fourth Princess lay.



Pausing a moment, he looked at the sleeping beauty.. It was strange how still she lay, curled up like a child, her snowy locks appearing at once like those of a baby or an aged grandmother. Her face was fresh and innocent. Gracing it were either lines or shadows. It was hard to tell which. Not even Rider. knew whether she was old or young. only that she was radiant.

Blinking, he stooped quickly. He kissed her blood-red lips. They were like ice. Yet, as he turned to go, his own burned like fire. Swiftly he was gone, and swiftly the princess rose. Throwing over her shoulders a cloak of feathery white, she grasped her basket and moved out the door.

Hers was a basket of snowflakes and icicles, holly and mistletoe, carols and candy canes, sleigh bells and sleds, gifts and disappointments, sleeping and waking, death and birth, tears and hope, memories and dreams. Hers was a heavy basket that she carried like a feather in the wind.

The white princess was warmly loved and coldly hated, not merely by different people. but at times by the same person on different days.. Half of them waited anxiously for her coming. Half waited fretfully for her to go. Still, when she went, she was always missed. The question rose each time she left, "Will she come again?"

In fact, the question arose each time any one of the four went away. "Will they come again?" No one really knew. Most lived as if their coming was inevitable, the cycle going on forever. However, in recent times the question is pointedly raised.

Stratospheric travelers come home with disturbing tales. Some say that in certain areas around *Ge* the air is growing darker, making it difficult to see to the horizon. Others contend that increasingly a putrefying smell burns the eyes and nose. Others report that the water in particular rivers and lakes makes people sick, especially the children.

There are guesses that such disturbances may in some way alter Rider's schedule and the coming and going of the four princesses. They could even alter the contents of their individual baskets. No one seems to know just what the results will be, but there is growing concern.

One report has it that recently Rider was seen handling a black mask. The observer said that after looking at it sadly for awhile, he folded it, put it away, and picked up the white one instead. There is a second report about a gathering of the Interplanetary Council either to find help for *Ge* or to activate the galactic quarantine for protection of the rest of cosmic creation.

These reports are not yet confirmed by any high level member of the Council, but there is said to be a restlessness among the Committee of Cosmic Concern. Apparently they are searching for some concrete way through which to inform the inhabitants of *Ge*. The most recent rumor is that a Volunteer has appeared. At present the intergalactic citizens are said to be breathing a collective sigh of relief, but now are extremely eager to know what the plan for the Volunteer will be.

Flash Word has just been received that the plan will be implemented through a VOLUNTEER CORPS (V oluntary O rder L inked U nconditionally in the N eeded T ask of E arly E cological R escue.). The Corps, though invisible on Planet *Ge*, will attempt mental contact with its citizens. The hope is that a few will be open to the signals and willing to take the steps necessary to retain (or regain) balanced life on the planet.

The concern now shifts to the identity of those who will first sense the contact and hurry to form *Ge's* own VOLUNTEER CORPS.

11-17-89

*In love and hope,
Granddaddy*

MY PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for Creation. for our homes in which we learn love and work. Thank You, too, for our spaceship "home" we call "Earth." May it be a good place for our grandchildren... and theirs. Teach us and them what it means to "care.." And to "share." Give us the joy that comes through being partners with You in the Great Creative Adventure.

Forgive us for passing on to our grandchildren a planet that needs special care now to reverse its decay and, restore both its beauty and its health. Teach them to do better than their grandparents have done. And give them the time to do it.

We're anxious, Lord, about our future, and we know that anxiety will not help. Give us, then, the faith to entrust both our loved ones and our global home into Your hands, knowing You love them more than ever we can.

Thank You, Father, through
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

5

DON'T LET THE WORLD'S GRAVITY GET YOU DOWN

Dear Grandchildren,

This is a pretty serious world we live in. With the increasing violence about us, a lot of the fun has gone out of it for both children and adults. Though the movies and television have brought us rich visual treasures, they have tended to leave less and less to the creative imagination.

I would not like to see us return to the days when we did not have these marvelous resources, but I hope that you may someday help guide them toward more challenging and enriching goals. It is not helpful to have our major entertainment leave little to the imagination.

Imagination is a gift -- a gift that needs a great deal of exercise. It can help you see into the future, as well as into the past. It can let you travel to places you've never been and will never get to go. It can help you turn the unthinkable into the thinkable and the impossible into the possible. Imagination is a mighty instrument for both good and evil. Therefore, you need to be careful how you use it.

A little girl hurrying into her parents' bedroom looked back toward her own and said, "There aren't any good dreams in there." I pray for you "good dreams" deep within. What you visualize with the eyes of your soul is likely to come true. In many ways you are made up of your dreams, lured and shaped by them, by them given your identity.

I recognize that imagination can turn into day-dreams that become a retreat from reality. The big escape from life. That is not what I wish for you, but rather is a perversion of it. My hope is that your imagination will be chock full of faith and hope. These can make of it a balloon that sails over lakes and countryside or turn it into a spaceship that lifts you beyond the orbit of things that sap your energy and drag you down into the dirt. They can preserve your sense of humor and your ability to share with God in the Great Creative Adventure of making all people one and all things new.

*Yours in that exciting Adventure,
Granddaddy*

FLYING WITHOUT WINGS

Jimmy and Johnny were twins, identical twins. They looked alike. Talked alike. Dressed alike. Walked alike. They both liked school and made "A's" and "B's" on their report cards. Though they were friendly with other 12-year olds, each considered the other his "best friend."

Neighbors thought that in every way the twins were identical, but they were wrong. The boys were very, very different. They were different inside. Jimmy liked to make whistles from joints of sorghum cane; carve baskets, cats, owls and pigs from peach seeds; and build skyscrapers from tinker toys. Johnny liked to lie on his back, look up into the trees and see himself leaping Tarzan-like from one to another. Or, like Superman, soar effortlessly through the skies on his way to save some victim from a heartless villain. Jimmy dreamed of building bridges across the Mississippi, and Johnny dreamed of flying to the moon.

The boys played together whenever they had opportunity. A special part of their play was the hour each afternoon as soon as they got home from school. Most of the times they played "Business." Each had an "office" "downtown," and they rode the elevated "to work" every morning. Jimmy was an engineer, and Johnny was an explorer.

Today Jimmy would begin, "This morning you came to my office to ask me to design a deep-sea diving suit that would let you go down deeper, far deeper, than anyone else has ever gone before." Then Johnny would pick up the story: "I told you that I was going diving in the Caribbean this summer, searching for Spanish gold lost there 400 years ago.. And you told me that you could have a model to show me by the first of the month." "Yes," said Jimmy, "that gives me three weeks, and I can probably hand you back a couple of days."

Sometimes when they were together the boys' conversation died out and each drifted off into his own world. Jimmy began a new bridge across Galveston Bay, and Johnny tested his new deep-sea diving suit in a spacecraft. Jimmy felt that he was a "down-to-earth" guy and that Johnny was pretty "spacey," He thought about things that could actually be done,. and needed doing. Johnny just seemed to. soar away into never-never land.

Then each asked the other where he had been and what he had done. Jimmy told of taking his construction crew and giant machines to Port Arthur and International Falls so travelers could more-quickly cross rivers and lakes from one state or country to another, so neighbors East and West, North and South. could know one another better, and the country be graced with lovely, serviceable highways and bridges.

Johnny told of viewing the Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, the Petrified Forest, the Painted Desert and Yosemite National Park all in one day. Sometimes... he told of traveling between "Mostar" and Zeutros," planets he claimed were beyond our solar system.

One Tuesday afternoon on their way home from school, just before they got off

the bus, Johnny turned to Jimmy and whispered, "Let's hurry. I've got something to propose to you." "Why are you whispering?" asked Jimmy, "and why not wait till we get home?" "Because this will take some time and a lot of figuring. "Sounds like a really-big deal." "You'll see," said Johnny, and they lapsed into silence.

"What can be so big a secret?" wondered Jimmy.. But about that time they reached the corner where their lane connected with the main street running by the school. Quickly they got off the bus, checked the mailbox on the corner and headed for the house.

"What's all this hush-hush matter?" asked Jimmy. "Why don't we get started on it now?" "All right," Johnny replied. "I want us to take a long trip together." "What kind of trip? *How* long?" Jimmy wanted to know. "And how are we going to go? Is this one of your flying trips?"

"Yes, it is," Johnny responded. "It's the longest trip in the world, and I want you to go with me. First, I want us to circle the earth, then thrust out beyond our solar system, set our course for Mostar, and push farther on out to Zeutros. Finally, I want us to head out into unexplored space. I keep feeling there's something more out there, some other world, lone somebodies."

"Wow! That is *some* trip! Your wildest yet. You know I don't fly. Besides, that's really *too* far out. I like to play our 'game' after school every day, but this is too much. I think it ought to have a chance of coming true. Otherwise what good is it? We might as well be killing time hanging around with the gang."

"I see your point," Johnny responded soberly. "And I know you think I'm 'spacey.' That's the reason you've never gone with me on any of my outer-space ventures. But, listen. You *can* fly, and you *do* fly... *now*. It's just that you don't think of it that way. When you build bridges across Galveston Bay or the lower Mississippi, how do you get there? Where do your machines and crew come from? How do they arrive on location? What do you use to feed, house and pay your workers?"

"When you see yourself as a future engineer enabling people to cross barriers and communicate with one another, you are flying every bit as much as I am when I circle the earth and head out for Mostar. You just think that how you fly, where you fly and what you do after you get there is a lot more practical than where, how and why I fly."

"Well," Jimmy answered, "I guess that's more true than I've suspected.. And, since the trip won't cost anything either in money or time, I'll consider it." "Fine," Johnny said with an elfish grin. "It's time now, though, to do our homework and finish the chores before dark, We can talk about it again tomorrow after school."

Johnny grabbed the wastebaskets from the bathrooms, bedrooms and kitchen, took them out on the back deck and dumped them in the round blue-gray garbage can. After dinner he would set it out on its special slab by the street for tomorrow's early-morning pickup.

Jimmy finished raking leaves from the back yard down to the ravine behind the

house. Yesterday he had done the front yard. Pretty-well out of sight, the leaves were left to add to the growing compost pile. In another couple of years there would be rich black dirt to add to Mother's bright yellow mums and Dad's struggling strawberries.

After a good dinner of baked lasagna full of mozzarella cheese and broccoli, a tossed salad, yeast rolls and jam Mom managed from the few strawberries Dad proudly picked and put in the freezer last June, topped off by a scoop of banana-nut ice cream, the family settled in the living room to watch the conclusion of "Dancing With Wolves."

A little past their usual bedtime tonight, the boys hurried off to brush their teeth, put on their pajamas and climb into bed. Though they had their individual desks, fitted with a gooseneck study lamp, they shared a matching maple bunk bed. Every quarter they traded places, because each boy' seemed to want to sleep on top. This quarter it was Jimmy's turn. He ran toward the foot of the bed, placed his right foot on the lower frame and bounded right up into place.

"Goodnight, Johnny," he called softly. "Goodnight, Jimmy," Johnny whispered back. Then after a moment's silence added. "Remember how it was when last Thanksgiving we flew out to Colorado to spend the weekend with Grandma Jean and Grandpa Jesse. Remember as we got up off the ground how beautiful the earth looked. Everything seemed so much cleaner, neater, and a lot more peaceful."

"Yeah, it sure did. But, why mention that just before we go to sleep? Are you implying...? Say, I know the world looks a lot better when we're a few thousand feet above it. But, we can't run away from our problems by going airborne. We still have to live and work down here on the ground. If you're saying that the entire universe looks better from some spot beyond it all, I just don't know about that."

"No, I suppose neither of us does," Johnny said, resigning himself to a draw on the matter. He knew no way to lure a sleepy, reluctant co-pilot into his supersonic cockpit. His final comment was, "I only know it still works better for me when I look *down* on a problem rather than look *up* at it"

As he concluded that Jimmy was asleep, he heard a murmur, "What if there really are other worlds out there? Distant fellow-space travelers? Somebody has got to be practical enough to build real bridges between us. .Somebody has got to pave the way for a galactic neighborhood. Hmmm. Well, I'll have to sleep on that"

Two boys smiled and nestled into dreams where both found themselves soaring without wings.



Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams die,
Hope is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
God give you dreams
And wings for breathless flight.
If not, then wingless
Send your soul soaring,
Wrapped in Light.

1-22-93

*In the hope of flying together
somewhere... sometime
Granddaddy*

MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, keep alive and well in my grandchildren a vigorous, healthy imagination. Let them see tulips in December and reindeer in July. And let them see good, strong, Christian men and women ... good neighbors and happy parents ... each time they look in the mirror.

Give them the vision of a world where hate is dead and love is in full bloom. Where the church is both a place of healing and a center for service. A golden pot of "amazing graces" at the rainbow's end.

Give to each one a special song, and let them know they can sing it always. Then when at last their branch gives way, let them keep on singing, because they remember well that they can fly.

In the Name of Him who gives us a
song to sing and the spirit to soar,
Amen.

6

MAKING A LIVING, BE SURE YOU DON'T MISS LIFE

Dear Grandchildren:

I want you all to be rich. I don't mean that I want you to be able to buy and sell Manhattan, Wall Street. or even Rogers, Arkansas. In fact, I hope you will not care too much for "things," that is, for the *possession* of "things." You may someday meet someone free of such compulsion. and then you will discover how poor you really are.

One youth said, "Everybody needs a reason for living. And I don't have one." I hope that you do, and that you will make certain you know what it is.

A campus minister asked me. "If you had it to do all over, would you still be a minister?" "Yes!" I immediately replied, "I have been disappointed, exhausted, angry, disgusted... almost everything imaginable, but bored. I have never been bored. To be bored is a sin." He responded slowly, "My father is a minister, and when I asked him, he said, 'No.'" I could but say, "I'm sorry," and I truly meant it. I have failed in many ways, but I have known exactly what I wanted to be and do. There is both a freedom and joy in such clarity of purpose, and this wealth I want for you.

Life unorganized and uncontrolled flies to pieces. It must be oriented about some controlling center -- whether person, concept or cause. When that controlling center is anything other than God, it is an idol. And ultimately it will fail you. The world is created to function according to the power resident in and revealed through the self-giving life of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, like a slot machine, it will eventually beat you.

Your life is meaningful when you have someone to love, some cause worth living and dying for, some sense of being cared for and sustained. It is imminently meaningful when that One is God-in-Christ, that Cause is God's loving Purpose to make all persons one and all things new, that a sustaining Care is the assurance that in life and death we are in the keeping of that immeasurable Love.

*May you be lured into Life
and "surprised by Joy!"*

Granddaddy

OLD STORIES RETOLD

THE TOUGH NUT THAT CRACKED

"Big Shot" was a squirrel who lived in beautiful Inis Grove, where lots of nuts grew in the park. More than enough for all the squirrels who lived there. However, "Mr. Big S." (as he came to be called behind his back) was a very selfish squirrel, who never thought there were enough for him. He was absolutely nutty about nuts.

I don't know when he got to be so selfish. Maybe, when he was a baby he was afraid he would not get enough to eat. Anyway, by the time he grew up he wanted to be covered in nuts, to roll in them, toss them about in the air, pounce on them and rake them in, over and over again. What he really wanted was to have *almost* all the nuts there were.

It was all right to store up enough for the winter. All sensible squirrels did that. But "Mr. Big S." stored up enough for a half-dozen winters. Yet, he would never give any to the Green Cross or the Animal Chest or the Squirrel Scouts... unless he had a few little ones that were partly spoiled.

"Mr. Big Shot" was, also, a "loan shark." He loaned out nuts at high interest. When he gave 20 nuts to a customer, he got back 30 by the beginning of next winter. So, you see, his supply grew till he had no room for it all.

"I know what I will do," he said, "I'll find a bigger tree to store my nuts. Then I'll sit back and say to myself, "Great Self, you have many nuts laid up for many winters. Just sit back and enjoy yourself."

"Mr. Big S." found an old elm tree where Mr. and Mrs. Woody Woodpecker had pecked out a huge hole and were building a nest. He did his angry squirrel bark, back and forth furiously swished his tail, and charged the frightened birds. "Fly" screeched Mr. W. to Mrs. W., and they scurried for their lives. Satisfied with himself, "Mr. Big S." filled the giant hole with nuts, crawled in and went to sleep.

That night a terrible storm struck. Lightning flashed. Thunder roared. Winds blew. "Mr. Big Shot" woke to the sound of splintering wood and the sensation of endless falling. Then... a terrific splash! Nuts rolled out and water rushed in.

The rest of the story is a bit blurred. A rumor going round has it that a Squirrel Scout pulled him from the wreckage; a Green Cross ambulance rushed him to the hospital; and he was placed in a ward provided by the Animal Chest.



At any rate, the tale is well-known among the resident squirrels of Inis Grove. So much so that when one of them gets greedy and starts hoarding more than his or her share, the others shake their heads and ask, "Could 'Mr. Big S. be back again?"

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Does this story remind you of anything that Jesus ever said? (*Luke 12:13-21*),
2. Why do you think Jesus told stories? Do you suppose some pious old Pharisee could have commented. "I wish he would stop telling those silly little tales and just preach the Bible?"
3. Does God say anything to you in this parable? If so, what? If not, do you think God is *trying* to say something?
4. How could you go about listening?

MY PRAYER

Eternal God, our loving Father, hold in Your Care these precious ones. Thank You for the assurance that You love them more than ever I can. Give that same assurance also to them.

Draw them tight not only in the circle of Your care, but in the comradeship of Your Cause. Give them the dream of a world made captive to the spell of Jesus, and let them with joy hurl their stubborn ounces into that fray.

Teach them how to live in this material world, to love it not for its own sake or for theirs, but because it is Your creation to be used for the good of Your whole Human Family. Help them not to covet it, but to enjoy it, protect it, and leave it better than they found it.

Let them not walk knee-deep in miracle, eyes tight shut. But recognize Your handiwork all around them and hurry to help get on with the Great Creative Adventure. Make them good trustees of the wealth You have entrusted to them, as eager to share as they are to acquire, that they can as eagerly report to You what they have done with it and why.

In the Name of Him who had no place to lay
His head, yet knew the world was His,
Amen.

7

CONSIDER CAREFULLY YOUR INVITATION

Dear Grandchildren,

What a joy it is to have you all here with us! At Christmas. Easter. Our Golden Wedding Anniversary. Your vacation. ...Anytime. It's great to throw a party and know that at least your loved ones will show up.

More than once Jesus thought and spoke of the Kingdom" as a "Party." A "Banquet"... or a "Wedding Feast." When the prodigal came home. the father immediately threw a party. More than anything else, the Father wants to have His children "Home" for "Thanksgiving."

What a disappointment to hear that you cannot come. We understand. The distance is too great. The time too short. The weather unpredictable. All are good and valid reasons. We understand. We grieve, but we understand.

There are no good and valid reasons, though, for declining God's invitation. To make "excuse" is to "refuse." And all excuses turn out to be trivial, silly and stupid. Trivial and silly because they're made to *God*. Stupid because they're made against our own best interests, the refusal of creative life and fullness of joy. Jesus wanted us to be well. aware should we consider skipping out on God's Party. It's more than we imagined, and to miss it is life's greatest tragedy.

See you there!
Granddaddy

MAKING LIGHT OF AN INVITATION

The Wise Old Owl was talking to the birds, "How wonderful," he said, "it will be when some day sparrows, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, chickadees, cardinals, orioles and cow birds all respect one another, live and work and enjoy the life of the forest together.

Just then the catbird purred, "How good it will be when we all gather to eat of the same sunflower." "The W.O. Owl looked over his horn-rim spectacles and scowled at the sanctimonious catbird. He did not reply directly, but proceeded to tell a story."



The Great Golden Eagle gave a feast and invited all the birds to come and eat, to sing and fly together. He told the Thrush to take the message across the forest. The Thrush flew to the Crow and said, "The Great Golden Eagle requests the honor of your presence at his Party that he is giving around the giant sunflower." The Crow answered, "O, I am so sorry. I have discovered a new field of corn and haven't tasted the flavor of the kernels yet. Please, have me excused."

The Thrush then flew to the mockingbird and said, "The Great Golden Eagle requests the honor of your presence at his Party that he is giving around the giant sunflower." The mockingbird replied, "O. I am so sorry, I have just heard the song of a new bird in the forest, and I must right away get it in my musical repertoire. Please, have me excused."

Finally the Thrush flew to the Cowbird and said, "The Great Golden Eagle requests the honor of your presence at his Party that he is giving around the giant sunflower.." "O, I am so sorry," the cowbird chirped, "I just saw a robin's nest that looks simply divine. It will make a perfect home for my babies. I really must go check it out and see if I should lay an egg in it now. I definitely can't come."

Disheartened, the Thrush flew to tell the Great Golden Eagle the excuses made by the birds. Not one would attend. They simply *couldn't* find the time. Their schedule was full

The Great Golden Eagle was furious. Flapping his mighty wings, he screamed, ""None of these birds who have trifled with my Party shall be there! Go out along the hedge rows, thickets and brambles, and find the little birds, the weak, those with broken wings, shriveled feet and wounded breasts. Those that are not cocksure, arrogant and too busy to bother. Bring them, and together we will share a joyous Party.”

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Does this remind you of any story Jesus ever told? (*Luke 14:12-23*)
2. What do think His hearers said to Him after hearing Him speak?
3. What do you think God through this parable is trying to say to you?

MY PRAYER

Gracious God, thank You for remembering us. Thank You for inviting us to share Your companionship and Your work Thank You for calling us into a life of significance, of challenge and joyous celebration. May we gladly show up at the “Party.”

And may we all be there together, Lord. Working together. Playing together. We miss one another now. The miles between are long, and the spaces are longer. We rejoice in one another's accomplishments, but we miss one another's company. We're glad to think it will not always be this way.

There is much we would say to one another and cannot. We do not know the words that unfalteringly carry our hopes, much less our hearts. Give voice to our longings and power to our prayers.

Bless my grandchildren...and their parents, those first precious gifts whom we love through these last. Whom we see in their eyes. Who run again to us on their feet. Whose arms are round us once more in their embrace. Thank You for another chance to say, "We love you. We are proud of you. We hunger to hold you... again."

Through Christ, our older, Brother,
Amen

8

THE AWESOME CHANGE

Dear Grandchildren,

I love you just as you are right now. The best “good news,” though, is that **God** loves you as you are. Yet, you are created to grow and mature. If you do not begin to grow up, we who love you most are alarmed. We will spend all we have and can borrow to get you the best medical services available.

Not only are we created to change, the fact is that we actually are changing all the time. But, into what? What is happening to the real self? We have dreams unrealized, goals unmet, flaws to be eliminated. You have a *you* that you want to emerge. God has a *you* God is trying to create. I pray that these two images may merge, rather than diverge.

After I completed these stories and gave them to the first eight of you, I found that I couldn't quite rest. Something seemed unfinished. Then, like a child running in and out, slamming one door after another, an idea kept interrupting my routine. I sat down almost like a prisoner at my desk while words poured out on the page. From that pile a moth fluttered free, rose and circled my head. Then the room. I let it soar. It clearly sought freedom to make a journey I had never made, not even in my dreams.

Like Peter, I decided to follow at a distance. The story is about that journey... and what happened on the way. It's really about your journey, too, and mine. I wish that intentionally we could take it together. Maybe, we will.

Sometimes I find myself dreaming of just such a journey... when you are older and Grandma and I are younger. We meet a number of strangers who turn out to be our “brothers” and “sisters” whom we never knew. It's quite a gathering, quite a trip and quite a “Commencement” waiting.

*Yours for a trip that
brings no regrets,
Granddaddy*



THE MOTH WITH THE SINGED WING

Once upon a Springtime in a land far away an hour before midnight a host of moths gathered in a giant elm tree. They greeted each other with a special wing-flutter, wiggled their antennae and for awhile buzzed with greetings and small talk about the weather and the sort of flying conditions each species had encountered. This was their last major stop before joining forces and pushing off.

As midnight passed the talk took on a more somber note, yet by no means doleful. Moths generally fly at night, you know, and bedtime was hours away. They lowered their voices but raised the pitch as the note of excitement stole in.

Here was a crucial moment in their journey. Old moths told of golden days past. Of long flights across continents, of winters in the Arctic and summers in the Tropics. Yet, always the talk turned at last to the vision of “The Shining Light!!”

It was as if this event had occurred a thousand thousand times before. And... it had. All the moths of which they ever heard wove tales about such gatherings and the flight toward “The Shining Light”. It was the passion of their existence and the center of their dreams.

Adolescents knew the stories well. They heard them from the lips of grandparents. Over and over from the time they wriggled free of their cocoons until this special hour they heard them repeated. Strangers on and off course, making their way South for the winter and North for the summer told similar tales. Some boasted of flying right up to the flaming sphere. Others, not only of that, but then for hours dancing and flitting in ecstasy about it. A few older, more-weathered moths warned fiercely of the danger of flying full into the flame.

At this great assembly the elders attempt to prepare the youngsters for what is soon to be. Everyone needs to see and enjoy “The Light” *Without taking it lightly.* Young moths, particularly adolescent males, are tempted to see how close to it they can come. One rampant view is that if one flies directly into the Light, s/he can emerge bathed in a brilliant sheen of his or her own that never goes out. Unlike a firefly that

brightens intermittently, this light is a constant glow, and one is forever held in awe by her/his peers..

An elder warned that the view is yet to be proven, and no one has ever seen a returning moth with the everlasting glow. Nevertheless, the rumor persists amid many an aspiring young flyer who is determined to prove it true.

The talk continued till a few eyes glazed over and snatches of silence punctuated the conversation. Wings drooped, and pauses lengthened, until a restless *Virgin Tiger* muttered, "Unless we get moving, there won't be many hours left before dawn."

A beginning rustle signaling group movement had but begun when an excited youngster (a *Rattle Box*), who wasn't at all ready to take flight, and wanted to sound wise beyond his days, observed, "There's something about it you can't resist." He chewed on an elm leaf. The *Rattle-Box* not only chatters a lot, but eats a lot. Cherry leaves are its favorite, but it will eat elm and various types of plants. "You just want to fly right into it," he went on. "It fascinates, lures, almost hypnotizes," so I've heard... and I believe it."

At this instant a new moth flew in from the night, a *Luna* just over three inches long. The large, golden-winged stranger was obviously a loner, and that's something unheard of in all mothdom. Usually moths are more social than people. Well, there is some myth about *Hermit* moths, but it's only a myth.

The *Luna's* quick survey of the scene revealed an assortment of *Tiger Moths*, *Ochre Wings*, *American Daggers*, *8-Spotted Foresters*, *Giant Owls*, *Caterpillars* busy spinning silken paths to food, *Royal Walnuts*, formally designated as "Citheronia Regalis" and preferring to be addressed as "Sir" or "Madam." He was surprised to see a cluster of *Hummingbird Sphinxes*, who (most un-moth-like) usually fly in bright sunlight. On their way the flight paths of the different groups converged at this giant elm three and a-half thousand miles from "the end of the world."

No one learned exactly where the alien came from or where he was going.. He simply appeared. As he flew in, it was apparent that he did so with an unusual flutter. Still, there was nothing about it ungainly or weak, nothing suggesting inexperience. In fact, it was the opposite. There was a fearless elegance about his flight and a majestic air about his countenance. Not exactly serenity, but a sense of certainty about his bearing and a depth of wisdom in his deep-set, unblinking eyes.

It was evident that the lone *Luna* had suffered severe trauma to his right outer wing. The edge was dark, thickened, and irregular. Strange how he held it.. not as a deformity to conceal, not as a trophy to exhibit, but as a simple reality to accept and then forget. He called for a cup of nectar and began to talk. To no one in particular, it seemed, though everyone leaned forward almost motionless.

The outsider lifted the cup, wiped his mouth with his right foot and began. He spoke both of the luster of the light and its deadly danger. "As I flew in I knew you were talking about 'The Light,' for I heard the youth say, 'It fascinates, lures, almost hypnotizes.' Let me tell you that it pulls like a cosmic magnet." Taking another sip from the cup, he added, "And, it is as dangerous as a forest full of night-hawks. Terrifyingly beautiful!" He said something about a fiery death," then fell silent.

"This, then, is not your first flight," observed a *Monarch Butterfly* .who had noted the excitement at the party and dropped by to see what was going on. "No," the stranger replied, "not my first, though..." Then his sentence trailed off into nowhere as if he had no desire to follow it farther. For a moment someone saw what appeared to. be fear in his eyes. Though afterward others argued that it was more like reverence or awe.

I had barely crawled out of my cocoon when I thought I could fly with the best of them," he continued. "However, on my first two flights I found the trip exhausting and had to drop out. Once I stopped in the Andes. The second time I got as far as the Falklands. I played around a lot, tasted life in the fast lane and fathered a family on the slopes of the glistening Kilimanjaro. Still, I couldn't settle down. Irresponsibility finally cost me my family.

"Partly to fill the emptiness in my life I decided to make one more attempt to reach 'The Light.' That summer I flew as far North as Siberia, then decided to go South alone. In Zambezi I joined a group, such as you and made sure I stayed with it all the way to the end of the world. You know, of course, that's where 'The Shining Light' is, just beyond the end of the world. It's a long, long way, and there is no reason to hurry. I wouldn't at all advise leaving tonight. My suggestion is that we, that is if you will let me join your company, all rest through tomorrow and set off promptly at sundown.

From back in the crowd came a sharp voice. "We don't know you," called out an *American Dagger*, "so why should we let you in our company?" "Right!" echoed a *Darling Underwing*. "Why should we allow you to make strategic decisions that affect our destiny?"

"I've no right," replied the stranger, "you don't know me and don't owe me anything, not even a moment's attention. It would actually be a risk on your part. Moths are pretty social creatures, and I am a lone stranger... You simply say the word and I will leave right now... However, I am continuing this journey, alone if necessary, and I will reach the end of the world before you. I've been there once, and I know the way."

"You speak bravely for someone with a wounded wing," chided a *Hummingbird Hawk*. A gasp went up from the group at the callous remark. Looks of disapproval focused on the smart alec, who fluttered a bit and busied himself with stretching and folding his outer wings. A buzz went through the group, a few moths saying the stranger should be allowed in their company, and the greater number shaking their antenna sideways.

A *Giant Hercules*, speaking as if he were the leader, announced loud enough for all to hear, "You are welcome as long as you remember that you are not in charge and, along with the rest, you follow orders." His 12-inch wingspread was lost on no one, and barely a dying mutter followed his pronouncement.

"Thanks," said the stranger, "I've given the orders long enough, especially since there was no one around to hear them but me." He hushed and tried to look as inconspicuous as possible for one with a regal appearance. In a moment, though, he was handing a fresh leaf to an undersize adolescent, awkwardly shrinking into the shadows and looking quite under-nourished. The trip would likely be impossible for him.

A faint blush stole up in the East. Almost to a moth all buzzing stopped, and wings were folded for sleep. Each knew the group had a long way to go, beginning tonight, with but a single rest stop along the flight route. The day was spent in restless napping, everyone eager to begin the journey.

At twilight the group prepared for takeoff and on signal soared into the dusk. The flight was hardly 200 miles along when the undersize adolescent *Ilia* fell behind. For the last 75 miles the *Luna* flew directly in front of him with the obvious intent of absorbing the wind friction and creating a draft to pull the kid along. It was not enough. The trip had sapped the youth's energy, and everybody knew that he that he must now be left behind. Resigned to his fate, the young *Ilia* fluttered momentarily and started spiraling downward. In an instant the *Luna* looped beneath him, caught him on his back, resumed his place in rank and continued as if nothing had happened.

The rest of the group thought they saw a noble gesture of stupidity. There was no way the *Luna-with-the-wounded-wing* could carry the extra load. They loved his valor and despised his judgment. After all, selflessness is pretty futile when it dooms the self. To their amazement, without a word of any sort or request for a moment's rest, the flight continued, and the *Luna* seemed as fresh at dawn as he had at sunset.

Restless slumber consumed the next day. At evening a solemn hush fell on the company, and the last leg of the journey was covered in silence. Then at midnight they topped a mountain, and there it was... the view of which most had only heard... the end of the world, and just beyond... the Shining Light! Bigger than the world itself, it was, and brighter than a thousand suns.

"O, look!" cried one young moth, "at how bright it is!" "Don't look!" cried an aged veteran. "Don't look directly into the Light, not yet. You're not ready." The company lit on the edge of the world and folded both wings across their faces. No one could, or would, gaze directly into the Light.

Timidly, at length, they slipped their wings down ever so slightly until through the tiniest crack they glimpsed the glow. One trio of male almost-full-grown moths boldly dropped their wings and stared directly into the Light. At first it hurt terribly.. However, in a few moments the pain started to subside. Finally it vanished. "The Light is gone!" they cried out. Others, startled, by their cry, opened their eyes ever so slightly and quickly closed them again. "The Light is not gone," they replied. "Why try to deceive us with such senseless cries?"

The trio with eyes wide open insisted, "The Light, if there ever was a Light, has gone out. Maybe it was all illusion, anyway, and we three have finally waked up. The old tales are false. This trip was a fanatical quest of the credulous. There is no Light! "

By now others began to catch on. Staring directly into the Light, the three were blinded. No wonder the veterans warned against it. They all began to marvel and pile up individual observations about it. "The Light warms," said one. "It heats," added another. "It attracts," remarked another. "It gives energy," another interjected. "It consumes," observed still another. "Well, we know it can blind," said several at once. A chill breeze swept through the tree, and a shiver through the crowd. "At least now," observed an older

Ochre Wing, "no one else will take 'the Light' for granted "

At that instant two adolescent. males swept past at full speed headed directly into the Light. For a split second the group was speechless. Then a chorus of shouts went up, "No!" "Stop!" "Wait!!" "Turn!!" "Don't do it!"

"Just wait till you see us, if you can bear to look!" they cried and were gone. That was all. A few witnesses up front said afterward they heard a kind of hiss or sizzle, and nothing more.

The crowd was gravely sobered, and those extremely close began backing slowly away, All but the *Luna*. As the group watched transfixed, he kept circling ever nearer, "That's how he got it," whispered a *Rattle-Box* hoarsely, "That's how he singed his wing. He hasn't learned much, has he?"

Then he disappeared. Some said he flew right into the flame. Others said it looked as if the Light simply reached out and enfolded him. At any rate, he was gone. Amid the excitement of finally reaching the desired goal, a sadness stole in, settling upon them all. They had grown to admire... perhaps, even care for, the lone stranger.

No signal was given to leave until everyone flew round the Light, up close to the Light, felt its warmth, bathed in its glow and were confident they could carry away something of its energy. In fact, they shared the amazement of the undernourished *Ilia Underwing* who realized that he was now quite strong.

After a long time, no one knew how long, the *Giant Hercules* gave the signal, and the company headed out on its daring and dangerous trek home. As the varied ranks turned in a giant rainbow arc for one last look, they were greeted by a brilliant object streaking toward them at incredible speed. It was beautiful beyond description and glowed with the radiance of the Light. The thick, dark scar on its wing was gone. However, new markings appeared in the shape and location of the old wound.

"It's the final metamorphosis!" someone exclaimed. Nobody answered, but a host of antennae fluttered vertically. For awhile the transformed moth flew at the head of the returning army. Then, it zoomed away, and no one asked if it would return. At their first rest stop they agreed that the old myth had truth in it after all. The Light could consume, but the Light could, also, transform. Here was another tale to tell the young on the next trip down.

The adolescent *Ilia*, managing to be quite mature, kept periodically touching his breast. "It rested on his back," he whispered more to himself than any other. "He carried me when I could fly no more." Somehow he seemed to know that he must do the same for another. It was strange, friends commented, how increasingly he grew to look like the lone *Luna*. Though there was no wound to his wing, he became known as "the moth with the glistening eye and burning breast."

And... he always knew that he must make this trip again.

*Yours in the hope of a shining joy,
(around and within.)
Granddaddy*

MY FINAL PRAYER

Lord God, I lift up once more my grandchildren, whom I love so much, and thank You that You love them more than ever I can. I lift up, too, the grandchildren of people that neither I nor they will ever know, but who are precious to You. Keep them in Your care. Lead them in Your Light. Give them victory over the dark powers. Let their hearts know joy. Then at twilight bring them safely Home and kiss them all to sleep.

In the meantime surround them with parents and friends who radiate to them Your care. May they know they are grasped by grace and wrapped in peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Give them the Family resemblance to Your Son, our Brother, Jesus. Then send them out as carriers of His contagion, to the end that a little more of His will is done "on earth as it is in heaven."

Now to One who is able to do more than we can ask or think, be praise and power, gratitude and glory, and the joy of having Your whole Family "Home" for "Thanksgiving."

Amen and Amen!

P. S.

This is not all I would like to say, but it is a little. It comes out of a full heart, and it comes from both Grandma and me.

If you would like to write about any of it., especially some part that seems cloudy or dark, please, do so. We would very much enjoy such a visit, even by mail. And, of course, it would be good, to hear your voice over the phone

Hug your Mom and Dad for us, and tell them that we love them, too. Come when you can. Visit with God and get to know Him as Father and Friend.

I hope you continue to enjoy reading, learning and writing. As well as a sheer delight, it's good exercise for the mind and the soul.

I pray that you find it so.

*All my love,
Granddaddy Key*

FOR MY GRANDCHILDREN was written for children, grandchildren and all those who love them, who want to speak to open minds and tender hearts, who want to lift them up to our Heavenly Father in prayer, who want to recapture something of that spirit of our own childhood and help prepare those who will be keepers of the flame and stewards of this spaceship "Earth" long after we are gone.