

# THE RACE THE TORTOISE LOST!

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After being soaked through and through from the dewdrops dripping off the different foliage's of the drenched jungle we felt as if we were in a Brazilian rainforest during an afternoon shower instead of the massive jungles of Africa. Combining the sweet and stale smells of the dampened jungle with the alluring aromas of the fresh flowers, which grew wild in the open plains, caused our thoughts to wander to the feelings we were on a great Safari hunt in search of lions, tigers, and all the dangerous animals that God had placed in the mighty jungles of Africa. We felt as if we were the Swiss Family Robinsons, Robin Crusoe, and Robin Hood with all his merry men (or in my sisters cases the merry women) all rolled into one. Adventurous dreams of this sort weren't any stretch of the imagination for children who were ten, eight, and seven plus a two year old to boot!

The vast and endless jungle of our young imaginative life was a ten-acre thicket located behind the house we were renting in rural Mississippi at the time, something new to us moving from the suburbs of a growing town, outside the capital city of the state of Alabama with nothing to play in but a fenced in backyard. The wild flower aromas from the wide open plains were the fresh daisies and dandelion our mother had planted at the edge of the over-grown thicket trying to improve the looks of the pasture like yard. Even though threatened daily that we would be skinned alive if we didn't stay out of the woods, we couldn't help ourselves because the mysteries of this quaint but subtle jungle drew us in like a tick to the loose skin of a red bone bloodhound!

This particular warm and wet morning while on Safari in the trickling forest we hit the jackpot or so we thought at the time. The jackpot was to be our newest pet to be displayed in the stagnate water of the round concrete and bricked goldfish pond in the yard beside the side of the house. Having no idea of what we were doing or what we had at the time, me and my two older sisters started on an adventure that surely would have even made Steve Erwin the Crocodile Hunter proud. The most risky escaped we were endeavoring on was the capture and confinement of a giant loggerhead snapping turtle with a shell measuring at least eighteen inches from head tail. To add to the difficult chore of transporting our unwilling prize the

twenty feet across the yard from the thicket of the woods to its new home we had to do it without discovery by our dear loving mother because if she apprehended us she would surely take no prisoners!

Thinking quickly how to avoid capture I sent my next to the youngest seven year old sister inside to acquire the services of our two year old baby sister to man the lookout post so we could begin our plan to conquer our mighty foe the Tortoise! After a lot of bribing, threatening, and promising our crafty toddler lookout, we negotiated a deal with the young shyster and began our endeavor of wills against our worthy adversary the dangerous and vicious turtle.

My eight year old (the oldest) sister was frightened of our enemy because of the ridges and points on its shell and head not to mention the colossal claws on its feet. The only thing she would agree to do to help us in our quest of entrapment was stand a half piece of paneling board in front of the menacing creature to hinder its escape back into the wooded thicket and from the clutches of me and my seven year old sister's aggressive and relentless attack. Having thought out our ill-devised plans as well as kids of that age could we began our careful assault using a push me pull me effect with a garden hoe and rack from the back porch, which our mother used to prune her flower beds. I would push our heavy ugly new pet with the hoe towards the cement pond until I couldn't reach our quarry anymore without endangering my bare feet and toes. Then my sister would use the teeth of the garden rake to grab the far side of our foes shell and pull with all her might while running backwards towards the concrete cell till the determined turtle would wiggle free of the garden rakes grasp. Upon his escape, he always gave chase to one of us for a short distance which even though a bit frightening would start a barrage of laughter and giggling amongst us. Before I realized it, our toddler sentry had abandoned her post and joined us in our festivities of fleeing and giggling from our slow adversary, which at the time was alright, with the rest of us because we were having a grand and wonderful time. Then absolute horror shuddered through the very souls of all of us including our inattentive preschool guard.

Hearing the creaking and the slamming of the spring loaded rickety screen door, we reacted in a timely manner to save our threatened hides. Quickly thinking my oldest sister placed the paneling board between the turtle (who to all of our surprise didn't make a run for it) and our mother so she would think we were just playing and having a good time. It was not as if we were disobeying her by design. We were hoping and trying to have a new friend and pet in this new town. After rendering a quick survey of our playground, slash battlefield, she barked the order for us to continue as she

abruptly did an about face marching back to the rear of the house. Upon hearing the screen door slam once more, we continued to execute our relentless conquest of turtle entrapment for about another hour, comprising the total time of turtle transport to the cement pond around two hours.

Thinking we had pulled off the perfect caper while eating our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at lunch, our Benedict Arnold toddler lookout ratted us out ruining our well-planned Safari adventure! After our traitor baby sister had turned on us, we waited for our mother's loving but firm reprisal, hoping for the best but expecting the worse. Sitting there quaking from fear we awaited, for her verdict when she exposed her hand saying, "Wait until your father gets home!"

Even though our dread and fear was sincere, it in no way diminished our preliminary joy of victory at least until our father arrived home that day.

Upon our father and uncles arrival home from work, our beloved mom met them at the doorway with the tale of our adventurous day, which in turn caused them to burst into a fit of laughter. Telling my uncle to retrieve the gun from the work truck and for our mom to get them a cold drink our dear ole dad circled the house to the turtle's prison to carry out our prisoner's execution with me begging and pleading all the way to spare the convicts meager existence. Laughing at me for crying (I was only ten) they popped the tops on their drinks taking a big swig. Then my six foot three uncle set down his drink taking aim at the huge head of the snapping turtle with the twelve-gauge shotgun, relieving the poor turtle from the torture it had been enduring since we had shoved it into its prison cell.

Unfortunately, for our new pet my sisters and I knew very little about taking care of turtles. First off, we thought it was an herbivore instead of a carnivore, so we threw leaves, branches, and clumps of grass for it to eat. My sisters and I were not overly smart kids for sure because our second wrong assumption would have also resulted in the prisoner's death, but in a less humane way. We thought turtles were like fish not understanding that they were air-breathing creatures like us and they needed a log or island so they could rest. The cell we had trapped him in had an overflow pipe that kept the water level of the stagnant water at least eight inches down from

the ground level, too tall for him to climb, thus leaving the turtle only one of two choices, sink or swim.

Still laughing at my expense my dad and uncle discarded the poor prisoner's remains into a shallow grave, which our mixed bred dogs Jigs and Cochise dug up that night. They didn't realize what upset me so much wasn't that I liked the turtle the same way I loved the dogs or even the fact they had killed an animal not to be used for food or clothing. I understood some critters needed killing, because once a month dad and I had to kill the one-foot file tail rats that snuck into the screened in back porch to keep them from eating the dry dog food and possibly giving us diseases.

I cried that day because of all the work and effort my sisters and I had involved in the capture of the reptilian beast, was instantly undone by the loud report of the shotgun. The turtle was our dangerous dinosaur we were going to put on display like the mighty King Kong, which would have surely made us world renown and famous!

Drifting back thru the fabric of time to my youth so many years ago to the day my sisters and I battled with a ferocious and highly capable foe. We were on that day glorified big game Safari hunters who had succeeded in the capture of one of Gods most stubborn and dangerous creatures to ever crawl across His most glorious earth. At that time, we were both proud and humbled by our great accomplishment and the feeling of pride we had.

The day of our first and magnificent achievement!  
To voice it in a classical way we;  
**THE HARES OUT RAN THE TORTOISE**  
The day my sisters and I became  
King and Queens of the mighty jungle!

# CRADLE

This place of shelter,  
This bed of toys,  
This sign of safety,  
This home of joys!

The beginning of life,  
The school of learning,  
The building of basics,  
The start of yearning!

What is this place?  
What is its function?  
What is its purpose?  
But a place of junction!

He made her complete,  
He knew all her secrets,  
She made him compete,  
For all of her affection!

He's went on before,  
To start their new life,  
She soon followed him,  
To again be his wife,  
Together in heaven,  
In a new cradle of life!

# PURTY TOES

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“Girl that tickles,” I screeched loudly jerking way smiling from ear to ear as the three old giggled but determinedly continued in the task she had talked me into letting her do. Being a man, I have always been a sucker for younger women especially when they are three and call me daddy Roy, not to mention I have always allowed women of all ages to torture me, mashing bumps, plucking unwanted hairs, et cetera. The little Sierra had been a part of my life for over a year and a half and though talking plainly at this age she had been my very own personal and private therapist since the first day that I strained to understand her at the age of eighteen months. God blessed me with her to help heal my broken heart and soul, by placing her into my life to replace my only daughter who died at the age of eighteen in a car accident the year previous. She was both a blessing and a curse at times, a sincere blessing because of her unconcealed love for me and the joy she brought me, a curse because watching her play and live her little life I sometimes saw my baby girl when she was that age, which in turn made me cry. I am thankful for the time allowed for me to know her though now her I miss too!

Being a divorced man of many years is not an easy thing because of children. Allow me to explain, when you progress in a relationship with a new and exciting woman she brings you into her none dating life and you meet her children. If all goes well an attachment develops to her kids but after the newness of the relationship fades away you often do not make it, thus the children lose another step daddy. This breaking children’s hearts deeply troubles me so after a breakup I will not date for years. I worry so about the children and the long-term effects, because all they ever know is men abandoning them, which can lead to mistrust of men. Their mothers are grown up girls and they can handle the breakup with nothing more than a shrug, (slight pun), but the children still believe in fairy tells and happily ever after so I become gun shy and want to never be the killer of young dreams ever again. So Sierra now six, her nine year old brother Donald, and I have become estranged after their mothers and mine breakup a year and a half ago, though every time they see me they still climb me like a tree

covering me with hugs, kisses, and love! Enough of the self-pity and now back to the story!

Sierra was turning into a full-fledged little girl at the age of three with the obvious help of her beautician mother and like all young girls; she of course wanted to be like her mother, so thence the night of the purty toes! As I said earlier, I was wrapped, unlike the music from the new generation, but the wrapped all decent men of the world experience after becoming wrapped around the little finger of a precious little girl who loved you. Not for your looks, your money, or prestige but rather she loved you because you were plain ole you. Oops, there I again down another rabbit hole!

The thing that was tickling so badly was her applying nail polish, and to prove my ignorance, I agreed to a multi-color theme. Between her petite little fingers and the bristles from the many nail polish brushes, I was being tortured on top of her scolding, "To stay still."

"I am trying baby girl Sierra," I said.

"Try harder daddy Roy," she exclaimed with authority.

"Only for you girl," I said trying hard to concentrate on my breathing.

"You better," she said attacking the next toe.

"I will," I promised while admiring her artwork and giggling as she tried hard to paint between the lines so to speak, which is all but impossible for a three year old. To add to the spectacle of the different colored paints on all my toe nails and little piggy's was the cotton balls she had pinched between all my digits, which in its own right was quite ticklish.

Suffering through the ticklish torture of that night, I was glad it was the dead of winter so no one would see my feet, giving the nail polish time to dissolve before flip-flop time. Thinking my secret was safe because winter would conceal her masterpiece, (which Sierra commented upon daily by saying, "They are so purty"), then my worst fears were exposed because I was continuously narced out. Donald her six year old brother at the time was the first to rat me out at church one night saying, "Daddy Roy has girly toes!"

Since that first night at the church Sierra had joined her brother in the festivities of exposing my secret as they both informed the public, at malls, restaurants, stores, in front of the families, etc. but all things must come to an end and the nail paint wore off. I now have regrets that I did not let her reapply the nail color once again, if I had only known that soon after our friendship would come to an end remembering the escapades of that joyful and ticklish night I now would welcome the high adventure known as the PURTY TOES!

# CURTAIN

No one was welcome, no one was allowed in,  
No one could see her, no one she called friend,  
She was always so distant, she was so all alone,  
She was always in hiding, never felt quite at home.

He would always be patient, hung in from the start,  
He knows the place hidden, that harbors her heart,  
Yet cold; he knew in her was a great love for certain,  
A love when blossomed would pull back her curtain!



## HALE FIRE

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“Anita! Where are you,” Andy answered gazing frantically for his wife amongst the frightened throng of entwined bodies dodging back and forth from the massive pieces of falling rubble.

“Anita, can you hear me?”

“Andy I am over here! I’m over hear,” Anita yelled loud as she could, jumping up and down while waving her arms trying to catch her husband’s attention.

“Don’t move baby I’m coming to you,” he hollered dodging more debris pummeling from the upper levels of their great city.

“I am honey,” she screamed keeping an eye on the large chunks of wreckage dropping to the foundations of their mighty city where they abode was located.

“Anita what are you doing standing there, you are going to be killed,” Arlene screamed as her and her husband Alan,( Andy and hers friends), grabbed Anita by her arms dragging her towards the entrance way which led to the upper levels.

“Stop it! I said STOP it.” Anita screamed yanking loose from her best friends grasp.

“Hold on Alan I’m here,” Andy said.

“I am sorry Anita but we thought you were frozen in fear and we could not leave you behind,” Alan said.

“Okay line up behind me and we will try to work our way to the upper levels,” Andy said taking charge of the situation. “ Do not, I repeat do not, let any of the foul smelling liquid get on you because whatever it is, it will burn your skin like an acid!”

“Have either of you seen Luke or Henry,” Arlene screamed above the noise of the commotion of the panicked and freaked out Bottom Dwellers.

“I haven’t,” Anita, said studying the upper levels for the strange liquid and falling debris.

“I haven’t seen your brothers either,” Andy, said leading his wife and best friends around another group of Bottom Dwellers frozen stiff from fear.

Bottom Dwellers... that was the name embellished upon all of them who lived below the surface levels of their mighty city. Thinking to himself as he halfway drug his betroth through the doorway of the passage way which led to the upper levels of their immaculate city. He knew every one of his small group were worried about someone that lived in the city. Brothers, sisters, moms, dads, friends, and family. He was worried too about his sister Amy and new brother-in-law Arty who lived two levels down from the surface level. While running to Anita, previously he had to steady keep his eyes on the surface levels to avoid rubble from landing on him and during this time of self-preservation, he scanned the destruction of the city. Much to his dismay, he saw the section of the city his sister lived in vastly destroyed. He wished her and her husband luck because that was the only thing he could do under the circumstances and hope none of the bodies which had plummeted from the high rise apartments were theirs.

"Watch out Andy," Anita screamed breaking him free from his deep and depressing thoughts as she jerked against his arm making him dart to the right. Looking down for a brief moment as he sidestepped, he caught glimpse of a toddler who couldn't have been older than two years old.

"I didn't see you down there little fellow," he said picking him up so the panicked crowd wouldn't trample over him.

"Where's my mommy? Mister, have you seen my mommy," the young one asked.

"I haven't seen your mommy but we will look for her on the way to the top of the city. What's your name little fellow," Anita asked as she surveyed the little boy to make sure he didn't have any injuries.

"My name is Arnold."

"Well Arnold I'm sure your mommy is going to the surface level just like us so we will keep an eye out for her," Andy said fearing some disaster had done took her but there was a chance his mother had lost him in the maddening throngs of Bottom Dwellers.

"We are fixing to be exposed to the central sanctuary of the city," he said. "Anybody hurt?"

"I'm fine if you don't count this breather," Alan said wheezing.

"I'm with him on the breather part baby."

"Why are they attacking us and who are they?"

"Your guess is good as mine Arlene but there is one thing for certain they are kicking our buns right now. I am sure Queen Ann has our military leaders preparing a counter attack against whatever or whoever our foes are but it's safe to assume all the Bottom Dwellers are on their own," Alan surmised and deducted.

“We really need to keep moving if everyone has caught their breath,” Andy stated.

“Are we going to find my mommy?”

“That is at the top of our list Arnold. What is your mommy’s name,” Anita asked.

“Her name is mommy,” Arnold stated flatly.

“Makes perfect sense to me,” Arlene snickered.

“No Arnold not what you call her but what does your daddy call her,” Andy chirped in giving Anita a chance to regain her composure as she tried hard not to laugh at the preschoolers sensibility.

“My daddy doesn’t live with us anymore. He lives with Agatha.”

“What do your mommy’s friends call her,” Andy asked once more hoping to retrieve the information so they could continue their journey.

“They call her Angel,” the frightened and confused infant said.

“Arnold I want you to ride on my back like I was a horsey. Doesn’t that sound fun,” Andy said throwing the pre-kindergartener on his back.

“Yippee,” Arnold yelled with glee.

“Alright you hold on tight Arnold and the rest of you grab hands so we don’t lose each other. Be sure and to call out for Angel in case we happen upon her. Okay let’s go,” Andy, said stepping back into the flow of traffic up the incline of the passageway towards 6th the surface.

“OH MY GOODNESS,” Arlene screamed aloud in horror pointing to the bridge, or where the bridge used to be, that spanned the auditorium of the central city. Wherever the putrid liquid made contact with the expansion bridge, it instantly dissolved along with all the Bottom Dwellers, which were unfortunately stuck and stranded. All of them stood frozen and motionless for a moment until quickly thinking Anita covered young Arnold’s eyes from the ghastly and gruesome sight. Arlene followed in suit with Anita’s thinking and started dragging all of them back down the incline to the small pocket of safety by the wall so they could regroup and rethink their predicament.

“Arlene I believe you just saved our lives honey,” Alan mumbled still numb from what they had witnessed.

“We can’t go that way and I don’t want us to expose ourselves into the open anymore so what are we going to do Andy,” Anita asked her fear showing in her voice.

“I’m afraid we have no other choice but to use the old escape hatches from our last war,” Andy said dreading their one and only solution. He knew the tunnels were probably in shambles after the past few years of no use and there could have been cave in’s but it was their one and only chance of reaching the upper levels safely. They were located on the outskirts of the

city and whatever was attacking them was deploying its main forces into the center of the city so they should be by all rights unharmed.

“The way I see it, we have only one choice,” Andy said.

“The abandoned escape tunnel,” Alan inquired.

“But nobody has used them in years, baby. The lights probably don’t work and they may have even been destroyed by now,” Anita said.

“There is a good possibility they are impassible from collapses,” Alan stated.

“I agree with all of what you have said but I can’t think of another way out of here except by using them. I am open to any suggestions if anyone of you has one.”

“Mr. George’s hardware store is down this passageway on the left. I worked for him one summer in high school during summer break and if he is there he will entrust with lights and tools I’m sure,” Arlene said looking intently at everyone.

“That sounds like the makings of a plan,” Anita agreed. “Well what are we waiting for, lead on Arlene!”

“I see the number 2 on the door,” Arlene shouted looking over her shoulder at her husband and smiling. She had saved the day! For once in her life, her extra small frame had come in handy because the one place in the tunnels that had collapsed had left only a small hole at the top of the tunnel. Andy had tried in vain to squeeze unsuccessfully through the petite opening to venture farther down the tunnel to investigate if it was passible but seeing he couldn’t do it he tried to reason with them to go backwards and locate an open tunnel. Finally, after fussing and putting her foot down she convinced the big strong men to let her try. Crawling on her belly for about six or seven feet through the tight hole she emerged to find it was quite accessible on the other side of the little gap at the top of the tunnel. Telling the rest of them it was soft dirt, she started enlarging the hole on her side as they did the same on theirs. After fifteen minutes of back breaking work, they had enlarged the aperture to allow the others to cross over to her side, upon their arrival, they took a five-minute break and ten minutes later they were, here standing at the door unsure if they wanted to venture through it to the unknown!

“Well I’m not getting any younger,” Alan said stepping up to the door twisting the handle, cautiously pushing it open and to everyone’s surprise

there wasn't a soul in sight but you could still here the frantic commotion continuing on the other side of the wall.

"Which way from here," Anita asked.

"The noise sounds more prominent to our right so that must mean a doorway of some kind," Andy said.

"I have to go pee," young Arnold said grabbing between his legs and for a brief moment, they forgot about their dire situation and burst into fits of spontaneous laughter.

Holding onto each other tightly Andy guided them out the doorway amongst the squirming throng. Glimpsing intently at every member of the throng they fled with the crowd hoping to see a familiar face they recognized from their apartment complex down below in the now destroyed city. Andy glanced over his shoulder smiling and giving Anita's hand a firm squeeze reassuring her it would soon be all right, while he came to the sobering fact that a lot of their friends and neighbors weren't as fortunate as they were. As their small troop drifted into a trance like state remembering their wrecked homes and lives, they heard a member of the crowd shout their freedom was in front of them that their journey of escape was at an end or so they hoped. They all stepped up on their tiptoes searching for their salvation when instantly out of nowhere there was an extra bright light.....

"WOW!"

"Did you say something Pete," the grizzled old man asked.

"Wow, Mr. Hale that was big\_\_ and \_\_beautiful," young Pete replied with his jaw still dropped from the explosive power of the gasoline.

"I told you it would be spectacular, didn't I?"

"Yes sir but I never even imagined it would be so big!"

"There is one thing for certain Pete. Them mean ole ants wont never bite little Sara again."

"Mean ants, mean," little Sara said in her cute two year old voice.

"That is right Sara them ants bit you bad, didn't they," Mrs. Hale said lovingly to the precious little petite blonde headed girl who, along with her brother, was left daily in her and Roger's care. They loved Sara and Pete so much that wouldn't except no money for babysitting, besides their mom Sherry was a waitress at the local hometown restaurant and what little

money she made she needed ever since her good for nothing husband ended up in the state prison for armed robbery and attempted murder for shooting the owner's nephew. She didn't want charity even though they insisted, so on her only day off she made them Sunday dinner as payment for their services. Every once in a while Roger and her would lay down the law and make her go out on the town with her friends so she might one day replace her incarcerated ex with a fine decent man because she wasn't but twenty six and very attractive.

"Mean ants hurt me here and here and here," Sara continued to point at the ant bite bumps on her legs and hands, sometimes pointing at the same one over and over again.

"These ants aren't going to hurt you ever again Sara cause Mr. Hale burnt them up. Hey, Mr. Hale is this what the preacher meant last Sunday morning when he spoke of..... HALE FIRE.....?"

# FORGIVEN

Sleep will not come,  
It is lost somewhere in the mix,  
Of all the hurt by me,  
For the life of me, I can not fix!  
You loved me even,  
Though I at times took your joy,  
You who guarded me,  
Cause I'm your son & only boy!  
Things I've done to you,  
With all the words could I explain?  
Forgiveness I'm allowed,  
After breaking your heart with pain!  
Because now I have relief,  
Cause I know you are now in heaven,  
I will be left alone in my grief,  
God lent me you & you have FORGIVEN!  
THANK YOU LORD!! THANK YOU MOTHER!

## THAT WAS

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The high-pitched screeching of the smoking tires of the out of control car were the only sounds penetrating the still darkness of the deserted country highway in the early morning hours. The hot tires left dark rubber tracks as the small car slid sideways on the well-worn pavement before they lost traction sliding over the edge of the steep embankment viciously tumbling repeatedly to its final destruction at the bottom of the hill. Flinging its only occupant into the dew drenched, pasture out of the driver's door during the violence of the crash before forcefully coming to a complete and sudden stop. The object of the instantaneous stop was a power pole at the bottom of the incline, which the small car enveloped around crushing the roof of the vehicle across the driver and passenger seats. The small car wrapped so tightly around the telephone pole that the rescue crews had to kill the power to the entire community and nearest town a few miles away.

The single occupant flung from the car into the cool, lonely, dark and wet field was my eighteen-year-old daughter who died all alone that night with no one to console her if she wasn't killed instantly upon impact. This is one of the many thoughts and horrors that enter your mind for the first few of years of grieving someone you loved more than yourself, one of many what ifs and whys!

The early morning hour of my daughter's demise unbeknownst to us at the time was one o'clock in the morning approximately. A police officer from the city awoke me at two thirty that morning by pounding hard against the front door. At first the pounding scared me for a slight moment but then made me mad, so putting on a pair of shorts and grabbing my 9mm Ruger pistol I staggered thru the darkness of the house to the door. Standing just inside the door I called out asking who it was and upon the officers reply I set the pistol on the table and opened the door to find out what was going on and why they were pounding on my door at two o'clock in the morning. As I stood in the door way the officer handed me a torn slip of paper with a phone number on it and told me to call it. Knowing it had to be something bad I ask him what it pertained to and he told me it was about the name of my ex-wife. Shaking my head trying to wake myself up I dialed the number and a female highway patrol person answered the phone, after explaining



what had recently occurred she ask me how I was related to this person. I told her she was my ex-wife and she then explained to me that there was an accident and where it happened, she then told me my ex-wife was dead. Unsure what to do because I was still half out of it I called my mother and woke her up for advice. After explaining to her, the news I had received she told me to go to my children's house and wake them up and bring them home with me and then tell them the tragic news of their mother's death.

Arriving at theirs and their mother's house at about three thirty, I beat on the door and to my astonishment; I recognized the voice of my ex-wife asking who it was. Shouting who I was thru the closed door, she opened it to ask me what was wrong with me! Gazing at her bewildered, I told her she was dead! Completely confused she asked me what in the hell I was talking about? Explaining to her what had just transpired at my house with the police I was getting mad thinking someone had played a mean practical joke on us when it dawned on me to ask where our daughter was. Telling me, our only girl child she had spent the night with one of her best friends, who lived in the vicinity near the afore mentioned accident had taken place, I derive a conclusion after putting two and two together! Screaming at the top of my lungs that our girl was dead I handed her the piece of paper the officer had given me and ran frantically down the road trying to keep my pounding heart from exploding and after what seemed an half of an hour I stopped and screamed once more in agony. God in his infinite wisdom numbs our minds at the beginning of a pain this terribly great to keep us from dying of a shattered and broken heart. So after a few moments of deep breathing I concluded, though my precious girl was in heaven with Jesus, my son of eleven years was still alive and he was really going to need us! Arriving back at his house I went into his bedroom and opening the door, he asked me what was going on because of all the women, which had already gathered to console my ex. I laid, down in the bed beside him and I swear to this very day I have never done nothing as hard as that night when I told him his big sister was dead. His eyes just went blank and he rolled over away from me to gaze at the wall. For a few minutes, I rubbed his back but he wouldn't respond to anything I was saying or doing. Telling him, I loved him and to try to go back to sleep and we would deal with it in the morning. Though he never shed a tear or said a word, I knew he was hurt because she was his mentor and only sibling and though it has been six years, he still seldom talks to me about her. He did what any young boy would do he cried with his cousins and his friends because he was scared he would upset his mother and me!

The confusion which occurred between the police officer and I was a misunderstanding because he wasn't sure how to pronounce my girls first name so he had called her by her middle name, which is the name of my ex-wife. The female highway patrol officer must have been truly confused when I told her that I was my eighteen-year daughter's ex-husband. It is a night of painful, devastating horrors, which to this day haunt me but it was my girl's birthday in heaven so I learned to live with that!

That was the longest and worst day of my life, a day of helplessness, loneliness, confusion and despair! What transpired on that day and the next few weeks to follow seemed to occur from close and far away, sort of an outer body experience. If my parents wouldn't have guided me through it I couldn't have managed it! Though I had known death from inside our family circle when I had lost a younger sister at the age of nineteen, she was only fifteen it didn't touch the pain and grief I was soon to bear! One consolation was the fact my daughter met my sister, her aunt whom she had never met because her death had taken place seven years before her birth. They met in heaven and this was a joyous happening during this terrible time of turmoil!

The That Was days are like the-what ifs or the only ifs, they are things to be remembered but better left forgotten! You see That Was the worst day of my life, but on the day of her and her brother's delivery That Was the best days of my life. Her high school graduation event That Was one of the proudest days of my life and hers, the day she accepted Jesus That Was one of the most glorious days of her life! One day we will all be gone from this earth and That Was days will be left behind in our wakes, let us only pray they are good That Was memories!

# SEEN PAIN

Some see her attitude,

Some see mean,

None see unhappiness,

None see her Pain!

We all know life's battles,

We all know rain,

None know her sufferings,

None see her Pain!

She hides behind curtains,

Behind what's sane,

None know her childhood,

None see her Pain!

I dig through her defenses,

There is much to gain,

I search so deeply inside her,

To take away all her Pain!

# Mystical Stick

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“It’s just another chamber Professor.” Carmen said proud of the fact she had won the battle of the sexes between her and Greg. Sure he was a football player but she was the captain of her gymnastic team as a junior and in as good of shape as anyone at the college. More of a surprise was she was allowed to advance into the danger of the dark tunnel because of the secret.

“Man the rope while I go and investigate what Carmen found and if it’s safe everyone can join us.”

“Yes sir Professor.”

Crawling out of the dark small opening of the tunnel into the cavern, he embraced Carmen spinning and gently crushing her perfect muscular soft body to the cool cavern wall kissing her passionately out of sight of the flickering lights protruding from the passageway. However, it was frowned on for professors to be romantically involved with students he couldn’t help himself. He wasn’t a dirty old fart chasing after young women, far from it he wasn’t quite six and a half older than Carmen and he had plans of marrying her if she would have him. Since his class was required in the field she was studying, they had agreed to keep their relationship secretive until she had passed the curriculum, and on the night of her completion of his course, he was going to propose to her. He even bought the engagement ring already in hopes the love of his life would be his but he knew it was just about a give me because his touch still made her tremble.

Theirs wasn’t a whirlwind relationship either because they had been secretly seeing each other for well over a year since they had met online. They were unbeknownst to each other until their agreed meeting at the local coffee shop. That is when they recognized each other immediately from their brief passing encounters on the campus and after seeing each other, they decided to continue their budding romance after such a great on line experience with each other. After a year they still were excited at the sound of the other’s voice and touch, they were to this day the very best of

friends and lovers longing to be in each other's arms and company at the end of each day!

"What does it look like in there, boss," George asked shining the beam of his flashlight into the dark passageway.

Smiling at her private tutor and boyfriend Mike triumphantly, happy with him for trusting her to venture into the unknown darkness of the cave. Pushing him backwards slightly she tore her athletic and flexible body from his grasp saying to him teasingly, "You better say something or they might come investigating before you have a moment to calm down."

"We will finish this discussion later," he said grabbing her once more just briefly around her waist and giving her one last quick kiss on the lips.

"Whatever you say Professor, am I being punished?"

"No Miss Carmen you are going to be rewarded for such an excellent job of succeeding well beyond the call of duty!"

"I like the sounds of that baby but we still have to be careful, so you better answer."

"It appears to be safe but give me another minute," Mike said peering around the cavern with his heavy-duty Q-BEAM flashlight. It wasn't much in size but what it lacked in size was the mixture of illuminated brilliant colors of the different stones and jewels that embedded the damp walls. They were after all the first ones to stumble into this cavern. It was just dumb luck that big Greg was slinging a rock, slash boulder, and it knocked a chunk out of the wall revealing the small opening and after clearing the debris out of the way, he made the gut wrenching responsibility of who to send in first since he was the only qualified climber he had to stay behind. Greg was the strongest amongst the group, and he too had to lag behind to man the rope, and even though the fear of endangering Carmen was in his mind he realized she was the only one with the athletic ability to proceed into the darkness of the entranceway safely.

Concentrating on the task at hand while cooling down from his loving embrace with Carmen. He knew from first-hand experience the glitter that littered the walls was nothing more than keep sakes nothing of real value but there was a dug out notch, which appeared to be manmade into the far wall of the circular cavern about eight or nine feet long and a foot wide. As he started towards it there appeared to be an object laying on the ledge of the hollowed out hole and sensing no danger he told Carmen to call for the others.

"Hey guys come on in I think we have found something," she yelled thru the dark passageway.

"Could it possibly be?"

“Could it possibly be what baby, oops sorry? Could it be what Mike?”

“I was talking out loud to myself Miss Ball. This stick or staff placed in a hand dug crevice in a cave on a mountain in the land of Egypt reminded me of a story from my youth?”

“What story might that be Professor Grant,” Arthur Payne asked, the undisputed class geek down to the Buddy Holly glasses.

“First I need to run some test to confirm the age of the staff before coming to any conclusions Mr. Payne. Until then my conclusion is nothing more than pure conjecture.”

“What kinds of test boss,” George asked.

“Finally after three quarters of the semester gone you want to show interest now Mr. Benson?”

“Like yea man, it’s finally starting to get interesting.”

“Well I’m glad I caught your attention at long last and since I have it I suggest we claim our new prize and skedaddle out of here before the local tribe of marauders try and confiscate our new possession.

“Carmen and ladies first,” Greg said.

With the mercenaries within sight and the Jeeps, still two miles away Mike pondered their possibilities. Circling the edge of the lake was no good because the lack of cover would leave them exposed and he was not sure whether the trained guerillas would shoot first and ask questions later so escaping that way was far too risky. Swimming the lake was impractical to, due to the soldiers once again and the lake though small was still two wide for the group to swim across in time to escape. Upon coming to a strange decision, it would undoubtedly answer the earlier question of what the staff was. If he was, correct about the origin of the old wooden staff with the old unknown dialect imprinted on it then it should provide their escape route from the militias who were hot on their trail in pursuit.

“It’s now or never,” he shouted. “Everybody line up behind me!”

Standing at the edge of the of the lake firmly grasping the staff with both hands he raised it above his head and with one swift straight thrust he stabbed the bottom of the staff into the brackish still water of the small lake. Standing there not knowing what to expect he stared at the ripples from the disturbance of the staff spread out across the still surface of the quaint lake wondering if maybe he was to have spoken a word of some kind of ancient dialect to cause the miraculous act that he was hoping for. Still in thought, he came to the sobering realization this wasn’t apparently their means of

escape and as his panicked mind started to deduce their options once again.

Standing there lost in thought they were frightened and startled, by a loud, thunderous, mysterious splash occurring directly across from them on the opposite bank of the lake as the first ripple from the intrusion of the staff touched the shoreline! The ten foot wide splash shot straight upward to the height of at least forty or fifty foot high and as it descended back into the edge of the lake the water split from the far side of the ancient basin to the edge they inhabited. Stacking the waters from the mysterious gap on top of the surface water of the lake to the height of five foot and as Mike studied the way the water was stacked up it reminded him of the hedge bushes that walled his grandfather's driveway from his childhood. Looking across the muddy, littered, root and stump infested bottom of the lakebed he yelled for everyone to follow him!

Stumbling and climbing over, around, and through the soggy littered lakebed, they couldn't hear each other over the loud roar and rumbling of the standing water of the mystic trench until reaching the far bank of the small eloquent lake. Upon reaching the shoreline, Mike stepped off to the side and held out the staff for everyone to use as a rope to help themselves ascend the slippery bank leading to safety. As the last student cleared the lake running to the trees for the cover of safety, he grasped the staff once more raising it above his head screaming to the soldiers, which were in the magical trench and about to the middle of the lake. "Hope you can swim," as he struck the bottom of the lake with the ancient staff. Immediately the water collapsed upon itself again refilling the magical gorge with the dark and muddied water, engulfing the struggling soldiers.

"Are your suspicions confirmed now hon or do you need more proof," Carmen asked touching the back of his arm strong arm, fighting the urge to ensnare herself into his muscular torso.

"You okay," he asked looking deep into her beautiful brown eyes.

"We are fine at the moment but the those soldiers aren't going to give up this easy and at best we gained some time to make it back to the Jeeps before they overtake us again," Carmen said watching the bobbing heads of their pursuers break the surface of the lake heading back to where they entered from.

"You're right so we better get everybody back on the move. You know what?"

"What," she asked knowing exactly what he was going to say to her in turn starting her heart to pounding, aching to hear him say the words but unsure because she didn't want him to get into trouble.

"I love you and I need you to promise me if by chance I have to do something drastic to save you and the class you will do whatever I ask."

"We will cross that bridge when we get to it, now let's get going," she stated knowing she would not or could not leave him! Her place was beside him through thick or thin. Turning her back to him to avoid the argument she said, "Come on Mike."

"Everybody ready because the miracle we witnessed did nothing more than buy us some time." Mike stated.

"We'll leave as soon as you kiss Carmen! We know you have been secretly dating and we think you both make a cute couple so don't worry your secret is safe with us. We see how concerned you are for each other so get it over with and kiss her already so we can make our get away," Ann said.

"Hell we are even jealous in times like these," Joyce exclaimed.

"Well I'm glad we don't have to hide my feelings anymore," Carmen said lifting her limber and beautiful body to her tiptoes kissing him gently on the lips as he slightly bent over to a backgrounds of oohs and ah's.

"Okay that's enough already children let's get on the move. Follow me," Mike said taking the lead towards the Jeeps.

"How long have you known about us," Carmen quizzed the other girls on the class expedition.

"We suspected it the first day of class," Joyce answered.

"The very first day, are you serious?"

"It wasn't that hard girl. You know one woman knows when another woman is in love and seeing the both of you stealing glances at each other made it easy to figure out. It was apparent in your eyes so we knew for sure by the end of the first week," Angie remarked.

"We have kept it a secret until we saw you and Mike at the edge of the lake. We knew by the way he looked at you that you were longing for his embrace so we told the guys in the class what we knew and told them to keep it secret or else," Ann said.

"Oh Lord God you know they will tell everybody when they get back to campus and then Mike will get fired," Carmen said wishing their secret was still intact.

"Don't look so worried girl. I actually believe they will keep their word but to make sure we told them if they breathed one word of it to any one, we would tell every girl on campus how sorry and lowdown they were. After that they could kiss any chance of sexual exploits goodbye and they would



remain virgins for the rest of their collegiate career,” Angie exclaimed giving Ann a high five!

“Baby girl we also told them it wouldn’t matter which one of them did it they would all suffer the consequences if your Mike lost his job over this,” Joyce said.

“You are just plain ole mean girlfriends.” Carmen said giggling.

“You know it honey but seriously I really don’t think we had to be so rough on them because they seemed sincerely happy for you,” Ann said.

“We are happy for you too and you know what girl we all agreed after the first week that Mike truly loves you,” Angie stated.

“I know he does because when we are together, the only one hears or sees is me. Whenever we go out he respectfully turns women down that hit on him and I have never caught him with a wandering eye. He makes me feel so special to the point that once a week never the same day he buys a rose for me. Each one a different color and to top that off he will buy a bouquet of different floral arrangements for no reason and on special occasions and sometimes he places them in places to surprise me and other times he has them delivered. To make you even more jealous of me he signs the cards with poetry, some from poets and some from his heart,” she said happy she could finally, at long last, tell her friends about the man she truly loved.

“He sounds perfect,” Joyce replied.

“He is to me! He is the man I want to marry and to have my babies with but he hasn’t asked to marry him yet. I know he wants to but I believe he is waiting for me to graduate. I sure hope not though because that is still over a year away!”

“Why can’t I find a guy like that,” Angie asked.

“Probably because you sleep with them by the end of the third date, didn’t your grandmother teach you anything? They aren’t going to buy the cow if they can get the milk for free girlfriend, you have to make them wine and dine you before letting them even get to first base,” Ann answered.

“By the third date I can’t help myself I’m so hot and bothered,” Angie squealed.

“Ladies if it ain’t too much of an inconvenience for you we do require your assistance for just a moment for an assessment of our situation.” Mike asked teasing them happy to see Carmen finally relaxed.

“What seems to be the problem that you big strong men can’t handle by yourselves,” Ann answered teasing them back.

“Only this little step off here, which isn’t quite as bad as it appears to be,” Mike said looking over the edge of the twenty or so foot gorge dug out by the swift moving river at the bottom of the cliff. “The cliff is made up of mostly clay and when I was growing up, there was a cliff similar to this one at our swim hole on the river that was twice at least twice as high as this one. Now the guys are going to go first and show you what to do but if you think you can’t do it we will make a human ladder for you to climb down.”

“If you big strong men can do it I’m sure us little ole women can do it,” Ann replied looking over the edge cautiously.

“Alright then, everybody put their gloves on and Mark you’re the first one to go so be sure to jump out far enough to land on the loose gravel and slide down the hill on your butt and feet using your hands for balance. Okay ready set go,” he said watching Mark stop at the bottom of the cliff safely.

“Arthur you are next... Well I see every one of you have this figured out,” he remarked indifferently watching his students disappear one by one over the edge of the looming cliff.

“Here’s a kiss for good luck baby I’ll see you at the bottom,” Carmen said kissing him before dropping to the bottom cliff.

“Well if you can’t beat em join em,” Mike stated aloud jumping further out than the rest of them and running to the bottom of the incline stopping a good ten-foot further from the cliff than the rest of them.

“Always a show off in the bunch,” Mark said causing them to burst out into laughter, which was short lived as they all instinctively dropped down to the ground because of the rat-a-tat-a-tat of an AK 47 machine gun echoing off the canyon walls somewhere behind them.

“Anybody hit,” Mike, asked crawling back to Carmen to hold her.

“We seem to be ok,” Roger replied.

“Angie I know this is stressful but we need to be quiet while I find their location. Greg hold and reassure her for minute, baby stay here for a few minutes so I can back off from the cliff,” Mike said.

“My place is beside you,” Carmen stated firmly.

“Baby you promised me you would do what I asked,” he pleaded.

“What I said was, we would cross that bridge when we came to it and we are crossing this bridge side by side,” she replied grasping his hand in hers firmly before looking him straight in the eyes.

“I see I would be wasting time arguing with you over this so keep your beautiful head down as much as possible. You look to the left and if you spot anything drop down immediately. Okay are you ready? We slowly rise on the count of three. I love you, one, two, and three,” he said squeezing her hand to reassure her.

“I love you too and if we live through this we are going to have a good long discussion on where our relationship is heading,” she whispered back carefully gazing into every nook and cranny in her line of sight while slowly rising upward.

“Alright everyone they are still about two thousand yards or so away. They must have heard our laughter and fired aimlessly into the air hoping we would give away our position. They should be on top of us in twenty minutes or so. We know the staff works on still waters now it’s time to test it on the waters of a raging river,” Mike said.

Grasping the staff once more, he stabbed it into the waters of the fast flowing narrow river. Like before at the lake, nothing happened at first so he wasn’t surprised but after about two minutes he was feeling anxious inside because the soldiers were only drawing nearer. Knowing that they had no other choice but to cross the over the river, he would have to try to wade across the river, if not here somewhere up or down stream. Stepping from the bank expecting to feel the turbulent current waters combat against the footing, he would so desperately try to acquire, he suddenly, instinctively jumped backwards almost knocking George down who was directly behind him.

“Did I see what I thought I saw baby?”

“I don’t know baby did you see my foot standing on the water?”

“Yes, but how?”

“It’s the staff baby, it’s the staff of Moses, it has to be! No time to think about it right now because they will be here any moment,” he said throwing a hand full of gravel across the transparent bridge so they could see it.

“I’m the largest amongst us Professor so if it holds my weight it will be safe for the rest of you to cross,” Greg said.

“Good thinking Greg,” Mike said as they all followed the linebacker over the invisible drill, leaving him and Carmen last in line.

“You first baby, I’m right behind you,” he said taking her by the hand pushing her in front of him. About halfway across the tumultuous river the many small splashes from the AK47 bullets struck the choppy water to their left. Shoving her down to the translucent bridge, he attempted to cover her body with his when by accident he touched the butt of the staff to the span, which covered the rapid and deep river causing the bridge to disappear instantly from underneath them, leaving them at the unforgiving mercy of the small river!

“Mike help, me,” Carmen screamed as they were shoved violently down river.

Breaking the surface of the vicious river, he heard Carmen yelling for his help and trying to swim to her while still holding onto the greatest find in the history of mankind quickly turned into an impossible task. Even knowing this staff would prove beyond the shadow of a doubt the legitimacy there was a God and the Bible was indeed a history lesson of the Jews and their right to the Promised Land! Not even thinking twice about it, he released his grip on the staff and reached out to grab the most important thing in his life, Carmen. Wrapping his arm around her torso, he spun his body to take the next boulder on but luckily, he received a glancing blow from the huge rounded stone, which drove them into a felled over tree that was protruding into the river giving them an escape from the torturous and swift water.

Once clearing the water he half drug Carmen into the nearest small canyon and after traveling a short way into their place of safety he looked behind them and quietly asked. "Are you okay baby?"

"I'm okay sugar maybe a bump or bruise but nothing serious thanks to you," she said tying her long wet auburn hair into a ponytail kissing her hero passionately.

"What was that for," He asked.

"For being my hero," she said kissing him again.

"It's not that I don't love your kisses but we need to find the others and leave this situation in our dust," he said sticking his finger over her lips to let her no to be quiet cause he heard a rustling sound at the top of the ten foot cliff to their left.

"Professor is that you," Greg asked.

"Greg we are over here."

"Boy we are glad to see you two."

"Is everybody alright?"

"Yep we are alright now let's gets you out of there. Everybody hold on to my legs." Big Greg said.

Back at the camp, that night they discussed their day and all of its turmoil's over their supper of canned potato soup and cornbread with some fresh sliced tomatoes they bought in the nearby village and chasing it with warm tea to drink. Discussing what they should do about the find and loss of the biggest discovery of all time they agreed it was best if they kept what they knew to themselves. Without the proof and confirmation of the staff, they would be frauds in the scientific community, plain old quacks! Further discussions dismissed the idea of returning to the raging river besides

being dangerous, as they had learnt that day while fleeing for their lives the odds of them finding the staff intact or even at all had to be astronomical.

After their decisions of keeping the staff and its secret to themselves they talked of the miracles they had witnessed and the effects they would bare, on their lives forever! They each agreed they would from the day of their return from the expedition back to the campus they each would attend a church of their choosing and follow the God they now knew truly existed!

Once they had finished supper and washed off the grit from the trying ordeal, they retired to their tents respectively to ponder upon the miracles before falling fast asleep. Mike and Carmen shared the same tent from that night forward and as they talked laying on their sleeping bags he decided the time was right for him to propose.

“I found something else today baby,” he said.

“Is it a historical find?”

“Well it is in a way, or at least in our future history,” he said rolling on his side then presenting her with her engagement ring and saying. “Would you marry me Carmen Elizabeth Ball and make me complete?”

“Yes!”

“That is what happened the day your grandfather proposed to me,” granny Carmen said to her seven grandchildren.

“That was so romantic,” Sandra the eldest of the grandchildren at ten said.

Granny Carmen agreed even after forty wonderful years of marriage. That day was much more than the day of their proposal, that was the day, which changed all of their lives. The thrilling and dangerous day that they happened upon the\_\_\_\_\_ Mystical Stick!!!

# OPEN

Vast darkness, vast brightness;

Always different, yet with likeness;

It's true today, still true tomorrow;

With it come joy and with it sorrow!

It is never gone and forever here;

It last eternally, so we shall not fear;

Tho dealt bad cards we are coping;

It's in our souls so our hearts are open!

## THE SMARTEST PERSON I EVER KNEW & SPECIAL

Some would think the special person I'm talking about could possibly be my fifteen year old sister who died when I was nineteen my best friend in the whole world at the time the one who taught me of true heartbreak, my first bitter taste of death. Though the breakup of my first true love was devastating to me, it didn't compare to losing someone who you lived with for nearly sixteen years. My sister has been dead for thirty-one years now and my children never had the pleasure of meeting their aunt, my very best friend in that particular time of my life. This will be remedied one glorious day in heaven until then the rest of my family will have to wait, except for my oldest child, my only daughter, which leads me to the next part of this story.

I'm sure you would think she was the smartest and special, which she was smart, special, and one of the most precious things in my life. Another most precious things in my life is her younger brother, my only living child out of the four I have fathered. My girl was the only one to know life outside of her mother's womb. The other son I was to be father of was still born and my other child was aborted, murdered, by its mother and I have no idea of what sex it would have been. Again, you would think this smart and special person I am telling you of surely would be my eighteen-year-old daughter who now is in heaven helping her aunt with baby-sitting my unborn children until I get there but you would be wrong in this assumption also. The death of my little daughter once again robbed me of my best friend, as untrue as this sounds after being divorced from her mother for eleven years she was the female voice in my life. The one who told me I was being stupid or the lady was lying to me or what I should do to please the woman I was seeing. I can still here her saying to me, "Daddy you are being silly!"

My little sister's death taught me of grief, the lesson that brought the truth of eternity into focus for me and truly broke my heart, but the death of my little girl ripped the very fabric of my soul. If I live to be a million years old, I will daily miss her because her death killed a part of me, which will never heal because there is no greater pain than out living your children. Though my soul has been slowly mending over the past six years, it will never completely healed until the wonderful day I meet her in heaven with my other children in her arms! What could a father want more than that!!

Neither one of these is the one I'm talking about in this story, I am talking about my sweet thirty-five-year-old girl cousin who was nine months younger than me. Some called her retarded when we were growing up, me and my dead sister would resolve this with violence, but not her. She would at first become angry and tell them she hated them and then a few minutes later, already having forgotten the incident, she would grab them in a bear like hug giving them kisses, telling them that she loved them.

She wasn't born with her mental difficulties, they occurred when the doctor who delivered her applied too much force with the forceps bruising her brain. You could tell by looking at her she was a special person and her IQ at times was that of a nine year old. My late grandfather on my mother's side stated it best when he said she was the smartest one in her house and since her parents (my aunt and uncle) and her younger sister was addicted to alcohol and drugs, my grandpa was right.

These, true life stories I'm going to reveal will show the world how smart and special she really was. Every year at Thanksgiving my mother's side of the family always had our immediate family reunion and we helped in the celebration of my grandparent's wedding anniversary. This was also the occasion when we exchanged our Christmas gifts with that side of the family because we lived in another state and couldn't make it back. From our grandparents us kids always got a crisp five dollar bill in a bank money envelope, which continued into my late twenties with a child of my own, oh yes my baby girl received the same thing as her father!

Back to the story at hand, chased after another rabbit, my sweet and precious cousin was allowed to say grace for our bountiful and delicious feast sometimes. Here is an example of her sincere, innocent, and brilliant prayers! One time she stopped mid prayer and.... "Lord bless this food... excuse me for a moment Lord".... "DADDY CLOSE YOUR EYES".... I am back Lord. Or, on another occasion when she sincerely asked, "And Lord help ma maw run that sorry preacher off from the church!"

You had to be careful of what you requested in her presence because she took it to the Lord and she knew for a fact Jesus was her best friend! I truly feel the Lord has answered some of the prayers I have prayed in my lifetime but I know he listened to this special creation of His every time she came into his Holy Presence. Though she was mentally challenged, she had a job at the local Catholic school in the laundry but she also helped with the grammar school children. This was the only time she was around church except when our grandparents took her with them. Her mother had taken her and her sister to church for a little while and was even teaching a Sunday school class but had a run in with someone and she quit going. Of



course the church was full of members (notice I didn't say Godly members), so nobody ever called and asked her what was wrong! Another one bites the dust from so called church members! During an interview once Gandhi was asked why he wasn't a follower of Jesus being such a man of peace, he replied and told them he had once contemplated being a Christian until he met a few. Oops down another rabbit hole, now where was I?

Every Thanksgiving I could remember we left home from Wednesday night, the day before Thanksgiving, until Sunday afternoon and we always stayed at my cousins house because my aunt was my mother's only sister. We did this because it was a four to five hour drive one way but after her death we drove both ways but after the death of my cousin Thanksgiving was never the same, she wasn't there to love on you and the bright light she brought to our family had been extinguished. After the utter darkness of her death, we spent only a few hours at my grandparent's house and to tell the truth we never again spent the night there, it just wasn't the same!

I used to tell people about my sweet cousin, how she is in heaven now and not broken no more but now I see things differently. I realize the world certainly could use more people like her in it! My papaw was one of the kindest, patient, and wisest people I have ever known and I have even patterned my life after him but I am afraid he was completely wrong about my cousin. She not only was the smartest person in her household she was ..... The Smartest Person I Ever Knew & SPECIAL

# YET AGAIN

The lessons of life come from our various travels;  
Some to be remembered, some are best forgotten;  
Some bring us great joy, some bring us great sorrow!

Again I've failed, again I've stumbled, again....

These hard lessons from life make up who we are;  
These lessons from life, from our beliefs spring forth;  
These glorious gifts so wonderful, entice us of tomorrow!

Again life buds, again I am unnoticed, again....

Older wiser I see back thru time, to a time forgotten;  
A lesson for all, the secret wishes and the lost wants;  
A melee within us, sometimes deep, sometimes shallow!

Again I suffer loss, again I suffer hurt, again....

Like old seasoned warriors that fight all life's battles;  
The grandest lessons of an eternity, which are internal;  
This lesson of life I've relearned, still shows love is hollow!  
Again care is a word without any meaning, Again!

