



Anthony,
the End of the String

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1

The End of the String

Anthony was the youngest in his family. He had three older brothers. Jeffrey was sixteen and had his driver's license. Jeffrey was kind, and Anthony felt safe with him. Ray was thirteen, and he liked to tease Anthony sometimes. Kenny was eight. He was the brother who most often played with Anthony, unless he was too busy building something out of wood scraps or cardboard.

Ray and Kenny went off to school in the morning and left Anthony alone at home with Mom. Anthony's dad built kitchen cabinets in the shop near their house, but he wasn't always at home. Jeffrey helped Dad in the cabinet shop, and sometimes he worked for farmers in the Trillium Christian community.

Anthony didn't always like being the youngest. He had to go to bed before the older boys. Mom thought he was

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too young to go along to auction sales. He hardly ever got a brand-new shirt. Most of his clothes were hand-me-downs from the other boys.

The worst thing was that Mom often told people he was her *baby*. Anthony did *not* like being called a baby. He was *not* a baby. He was five years old, and next year he would go to school.

Dad sometimes called Anthony “the end of the string.” When Dad was introducing his row of boys, he would say, “This is Jeffrey and this is Ray and this is Kenny. And this is Anthony, the end of the string,” as if it were part of his name. Anthony didn’t really mind when Dad said that, because at the same time, he would gently squeeze Anthony’s shoulder to show that he loved him.

Anthony often wondered what “the end of the string” meant. He didn’t look at all like a string, and the end of a string was . . . just nothing.

One day in the winter, Jeffrey decided to take his brothers ice fishing on the lake.

“I’d like to take Anthony along too,” Jeffrey told Mom.

“Yes!” said Anthony. “Can I go along, Mom? Please?”

“Oh, Anthony, you’re so little,” Mom said. She turned to Jeffrey. “I’m afraid he’ll get too cold,” she worried.

“Mom, I promise I’ll take good care of him,” Jeffrey said. “We’ll make sure he’s bundled up nice and warm.”

Mom looked at Anthony, who was wiggling with excitement. “Well, I guess you can take him along,” she said. “Come, Anthony, let’s find you some extra socks and your warm snowsuit.”

“I hope I catch a big fish!” Anthony said.

The boys drove for an hour before they reached the lake. Jeffrey made Anthony zip up his snowsuit, and he wrapped a scarf around Anthony's neck. In place of fishing poles, the boys carried sticks with fish line wound around them and hooks on the end.

"Here's the string," said Jeffrey, handing Anthony a short skinny rope with a metal point on the end. "That's what we'll string the fish on. This time a fish will be at the end of the string instead of you."

Anthony held up the string and looked at it. So, this was what Dad meant when he said, "the end of the string." It was the last fish on a string of fish. Anthony grinned. He hoped the whole string would be full of fish by the time they got done fishing.

The lake was not frozen smooth like the rink at Trillium Christian School. The ice had frozen in waves, so they had to walk up and down little hills and valleys to get out to where the fish were.

Anthony was surprised to see little houses on the ice. "What are those?" he asked.

Ray explained, "Some people go ice fishing so often that they put up little shelters to sit in and keep warm."

Jeffrey used his chainsaw to cut a hole in the thick ice. Then the boys dropped their hooks into the water. They waited and waited for a fish to bite. Every so often, one of them would pull up his line to see if there was a fish on it, but there never was.

After the boys ate the good lunch Mom had packed, they walked over to another hole where two men were



fishing. The men shook their heads. "Not a good day," they said. "No fish."

The three oldest boys got tired of fishing and went exploring on the ice. They watched some snowmobiles racing out farther on the lake. Anthony sat by the hole holding his stick. He wanted to catch a fish.

All of a sudden, his line jerked hard. He jumped to his feet with a shout. Jeffrey heard him and came running.

"Way to go!" Jeffrey said, laughing. He showed Anthony how to wind the string around his stick. In another minute, a fine lake trout flipped out of the hole onto the ice. Anthony had caught a fish!

That night Anthony, the end of the string, took home the only fish on the string.

2

Bears Under the Bed

Anthony shut his eyes and snuggled down under his fleece blanket with the kitten designs. This was his first night in his new bed. Mom had listened to him say his prayers. She tucked him in, kissed him good night, and tiptoed out of the room.

Although Anthony was already five years old, he had always slept in a crib just outside Mom and Dad's room. He was getting much too big to sleep in a crib, but he didn't want to sleep way down in the basement with the other boys. So Dad had built him a nice little wooden bed and set it in a corner of the sewing room.

Since Mom didn't usually sew at night, she thought it was a good idea to put Anthony's little bed in there. She emptied two shelves of her sewing cupboard to make

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room for his clothes. Anthony felt like a big boy in his new bed.

Suddenly he heard a rumbly grumble from under his bed. Anthony sat up. Was there something under his bed? Maybe there were bears under his bed.

All at once Anthony didn't like his new room anymore. It was too empty and scary, and there were bears under the bed. He rolled over against the wall so the bears couldn't reach out and grab him. He was afraid to get out of bed and run out the door. The bears might chase him. He called, "Dad, Dad!"

Dad came in and turned on the light. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Anthony felt ashamed, but he stammered, "I think there are bears under my bed."

Dad bent over and looked under the bed. "No bears," he said. "See?"

Anthony leaned over the mattress and peered under the bed. All he saw was his Sunday shoes and a piece of paper.

"But there was a noise," he said, pulling the covers up under his chin.

"What kind of noise?"

"A grumbly noise. Listen."

They listened. Sure enough, a rumbling came from under the bed.

Dad chuckled. "That's just the furnace starting up. It's right under this room. You don't need to be afraid of that." He sat down on the edge of the bed. "I'm going to tell you a Bible story."

Anthony wiggled and smiled. He liked stories.

