

Midnight Medicine

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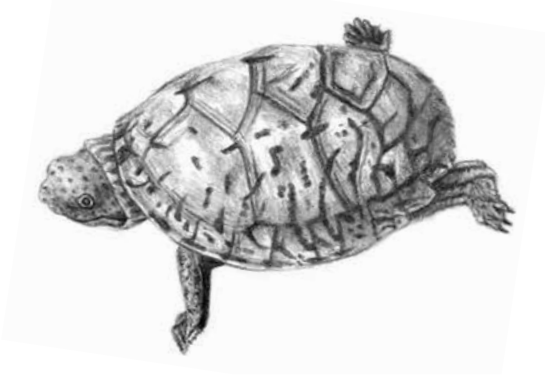
CHRISTIAN LIGHT
PUBLICATIONS

Dedicated to my youngest son, Lendon, because
you were eight when I wrote about Ronny, and I am
partial to eight-year-old boy entertainment, (and
because you long for a pony, of course!)

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Midnight Medicine



“Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you . . .”
The song floated back the hallway, rousing Ronny awake. *Who? What?* He sat up on the edge of his bed as he heard Daddy’s husky voice belt out the rest of the song, “Happy birthday to Ronny, happy birthday to you!” Instantly Ronny was on his feet and yanking on his clothes. Today, on his eighth birthday, Daddy would take him along to Squealer’s Auction!

He had gone with Daddy to take goats and sheep to the local auction quite a few times, and he enjoyed that. But Squealer’s was a much bigger auction four hours away, and Ronny had never been there before.

Ronny pulled on his socks and dashed to the kitchen where breakfast was sizzling in the electric skillet. He peered into the skillet to make sure Mom had

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remembered to make eggs-in-a-nest. Yes, there were six slices of buttered bread with holes in the middle. An egg stood primly in each hole, frying deliciously. This was Ronny's favorite breakfast, and Mom always made it on his birthday.

"Yum!" he said, taking a sniff.

Mom smiled. "Good morning, and happy birthday! Go ahead and fill your water jug while you're waiting. I have your lunches packed, and Daddy wants to leave as soon as breakfast is finished."

"You can fill two while you're at it," Daddy called from the study. "Put lots of ice in mine. Today is supposed to be a cooker."

Ronny dashed to the pantry and nearly collided with his oldest sister Sherri who was breezing in the back door with an empty laundry basket. "Whoa!" Ronny said.

Sherri laughed. "Whoa, yourself. What's your hurry?"

"We're leaving for Squealer's as soon as breakfast is over!" Ronny said. "Don't you wish you could go along?"

"No!" Sherri exclaimed. "Mom and Gwenda and I are going to have lots more fun than that."

Ronny glanced at her. "Why? What're you doing?"

"We're going to babysit Glendon's children. Doesn't that sound like more fun than sitting in a hot auction barn?"

Ronny hesitated a second. He did like playing with his two little nephews at his brother Glendon's house. But

Ronny quickly made up his mind. “Nope,” he said. “I can play with the boys any other time, but this might be my only chance to go along to Squealer’s!”

“Fine with me,” Sherri answered. “Just as long as you don’t bring any squealers along home,” she teased.

That gave Ronny an idea, but he kept it tucked inside until he and Daddy had hooked the cattle trailer to the truck, loaded the goats Daddy was selling, and were heading out the road. “Hey, Daddy,” he began. “Are you planning to buy anything today?”

“Why do you wonder?” Daddy asked. “You have something in mind?”

“Well ...I didn’t know if ...I mean, won’t you make a lot of money on the goats we’re taking along?”

“We should, or it wouldn’t be worth driving four hours away,” Daddy said.

“Then don’t you think ...I mean ...I wish we could buy a little pig!” Ronny exclaimed.

Daddy grinned. “You mean for your birthday present?”

Ronny hadn’t thought of that, but it seemed like a good idea. “Yes,” he agreed. “That would be the best birthday present I ever got!”

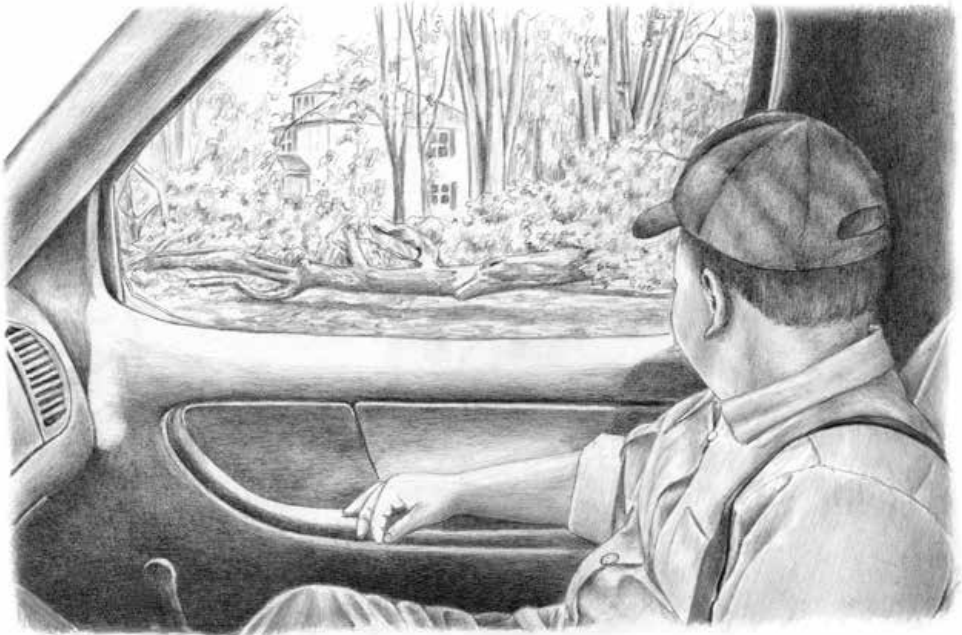
“Hmm,” Daddy said. “We’ll see.”

Ronny didn’t like when Daddy said, “We’ll see,” because it didn’t really seem like an answer. It wasn’t exactly “no,” but it wasn’t “yes,” either. But Ronny had to be satisfied with that, so he turned his attention to the scenery.

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He liked crossing mountains and rivers and going through country that he rarely saw. He liked playing guessing games with Daddy and trying to find all the letters of the alphabet by looking at road signs and the license plates of other vehicles. He liked singing along with Daddy's whistle. But after a while, the hours of sitting became tiresome, and he was glad when Daddy said they would be there in half an hour.

Soon after they got off the interstate, they saw twigs and tree limbs littering the side of the road, and the closer they got to the sale barn, the more storm damage they saw. Big trees were uprooted, electric poles were



down, and shingles had been torn off roofs. Road crews were out, moving some large branches that had fallen on the road.

“These people just had a bad storm!” Daddy exclaimed. “I hope everything is in one piece at Squealer’s.”

“Oh, no!” Ronny gasped when they pulled into the parking lot. Half of Squealer’s roof was gone. Animals were racing around between trucks. Men in big hats were brandishing long sticks and yelling as they tried to herd the animals into a pen.

Daddy looked at Ronny. “This is going to be an interesting day. Let’s get out and see how we can help.”

All afternoon, Daddy and Ronny helped chase animals, open and shut gates, and sort animals. It was supertime before things were in good enough shape to start the auction. Ronny helped Daddy unload their goats, and they watched the auctioneer sell animals until dark. Too soon, Daddy said, “Well, Ronny, we’ll have to leave, or it will be morning before we get home.”

“But ...but they didn’t sell the pigs yet!” Ronny wailed as he followed Daddy to the truck.

“I know,” Daddy said. He jumped into the truck and turned the ignition. “But they started selling so late, it might be hours before they start selling pigs, and we can’t stay that long.”

Ronny felt grumpy as they traveled toward home. Here it was, his birthday, and he hadn’t been able to watch any pigs being sold, let alone buy one. Now it

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was too dark to watch the scenery, and he didn't feel like singing or even talking with Daddy. He had hoped that going to Squealer's was going to make his eighth birthday his best birthday yet. The storm had ruined it all.

"I wish that storm wouldn't have messed everything up at Squealer's," Ronny whined. "It's not fair that we drove four whole hours to get here, and we couldn't even watch the pigs sell."

"No more grumping, Ronny," Daddy said. "I know you're disappointed, and I am too, but that doesn't mean we have to be grumpy."

Ronny glanced up in surprise. "If you're disappointed, then how come you've been singing and whistling?" he asked.

"It helps me feel better," Daddy said. "Do you think either of us would feel good if I grumbled the whole way home?" He glanced over at Ronny in time to see him shake his head.

"I don't think so either," Daddy agreed. "There's a verse in Proverbs that tells us that a merry heart does good like medicine.¹ When I have a disappointment like this, I try to be cheerful about it. I like to think that it does help almost like medicine." Daddy grinned. "Try it," he encouraged, and then he started whistling a cheerful tune.

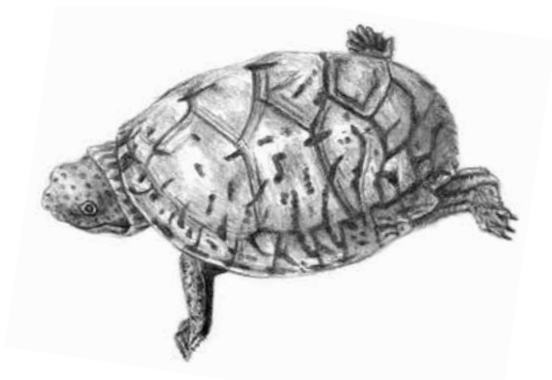
Ronny didn't feel like helping, but he started humming along because he knew Daddy expected him to. After a

1 Proverbs 17:22

couple of tunes, he actually didn't feel quite as bad, and soon he was able to chat cheerfully with Daddy about their afternoon spent chasing animals.

At breakfast the next morning, Ronny laughed right along with Daddy when he announced to Mom and the girls, "Guess what I gave Ronny on his birthday? A dose of medicine at midnight."

Lame Excuses



“I wish I had a pet,” Ronny said with a sigh. He was drying the supper dishes for Mom. His big sisters, Sherri and Gwenda, were outside picking green beans. “It wouldn’t be so boring around here if I had a pet.”

“Oh?” Mom’s hands stopped scrubbing her kettle as she made large sad eyes at Ronny. “Are you saying that I’m boring?” she teased.

“I mean—” Ronny stalled. He liked being with Mom, but still, she wasn’t like a brother close to his age would be. Ronny’s only brother Glendon was married. His only other siblings were Sherri, who taught school and was probably old enough to be married, and Gwenda, who worked in a bakery and was already seventeen. His siblings were all nice; however, it wasn’t like having