

# Dedication

To my nieces and nephews











A gust of February wind whooshed in the door as Tommy burst into the kitchen. “I’m hungry!” he declared, plopping his tin lunch pail onto the counter.

Mama was pacing the floor, trying to quiet Baby Rosa’s cries. Her face broke into a tired smile. “You may have an apple for your snack. There’s one more left in the basket Uncle Moses brought us,” she said. “Then please go to the mill and ask Papa for some money. Baby Rosa needs milk for her bottle.”

Tommy took the last red apple from the basket and crunched into its juicy sweetness. *Mmmm*, it was so good! *I wish we could buy more apples*, he thought. *Maybe Uncle Moses will give us another basketful*. He joined his little brothers and sisters by the woodstove where they stood, munching their apples.



When the apple was gone, Tommy tossed the core into the garbage and pulled on his jacket. The South Carolina sunshine shone brightly, but the chilly wind gusted across the fields of soybean stubble stretching out toward the feed mill. Tommy shivered as he trudged the half mile down the dirt road to find his papa. All day long his papa, Mr. Fred Dye, worked at bagging feed at the mill.







**T**ommy was glad Papa worked hard so they had money to buy food. Today was payday. He was glad he was eight years old and big enough to walk to the mill by himself. After he brought the money home, Mama could go to the store and buy milk and other groceries she needed.







**A**s Tommy opened the heavy metal door and stepped inside the mill, the dust from the feed tickled his nose. *Kerchoo!* he sneezed.

Across the big feed room, Papa looked up from shoveling a scoop of soybean meal into a feed sack. Sweat trickled down his face.

Papa stopped shoveling and pulled a red bandana handkerchief out of his pants pocket. He smiled at Tommy as he wiped the sweat from his face.

“Hello, there, son!” he boomed.

Tommy looked up into Papa’s kind face and laughing eyes. “Mama needs money to buy milk for baby sister,” he said.

Papa propped the shovel against the feed bags and reached into his shirt pocket for his pay envelope. His hand came back out—empty. Papa’s mouth dropped open in surprise. He dug in his pants pockets. No money!

“Where’s my money?” Papa cried. He grabbed his shovel and scraped through the feed on the floor around him. Worry filled Tommy’s heart. He began kicking through the meal near Papa. Where could Papa’s pay envelope be?