

Chapter 3

Beany Hand



Maddie, who had been eating quietly up until this point, gently patted Dad's arm with a beany hand.

Several days later, the children were sitting in the living room memorizing their Scripture verses. Mom, who usually helped Maddie memorize, was having another bout of morning sickness, so Mollie had offered to work with Maddie.

“Okay, Maddie, here’s the first section we’re going to do.”

Maddie squirmed. “Me want to sit ovuh theah, Mollie.”

“It would work better if you stay close to me. Okay, here’s the first phrase: ‘And seeing the multitudes.’”

Maddie repeated, “Saw the . . . what does that big wud mean?”

“Multitudes?”

“Yes, that’s it.”

“It’s lots of people.”

“Oh.”

“Alright, let’s try it again. ‘And seeing the mul-ti-tudes.’”

“And seeing, ummm, lots of people . . .”

“Actually, it’s ‘And seeing the multitudes.’”

“And seeing . . . Mollie, wheah’s my favowite wed jumpah?”

Mollie felt a tinge of frustration. “It’s probably in the clothes hamper, Maddie. Now, let’s work on this verse. ‘And seeing the multitudes. . . .’”

“Okay, Mollie. And seeing the . . . what’s that hawd wud?”

“Multitudes,” Mollie encouraged. “And seeing the multitudes.”

“And seeing the mul’tudes.”

“Great!” Mollie exclaimed giving her a hug.

After Maddie said it five more times correctly, she pleaded, “May I please go play with Maple?”

“Okay, you’ve done a good job. We’ll work on it later.”

Maddie ran off, calling, “Maple, Maple, come!” Toenails pattered on the tile floor as Maple scrambled around the corner of the kitchen and ran headlong for Maddie. They disappeared together up the stairs and into Maddie’s bedroom.

Max and Mitch, who had been having trouble concentrating while Mollie and Maddie were working on Maddie’s verses, were now able to devote their full attention to their own memorizing. Max was sitting in Dad’s recliner, Mitch was on one end of the couch, and Mollie was on the other.

About fifteen minutes later, they heard a loud squeal of delight, then several thuds as Maddie came hopping down the stairs waving Maple’s favorite play sock in the air. Maple was bouncing along behind her, desperately trying to grab the sock. Max noticed that Maddie had changed—she now wore a wrinkled red jumper. *Probably the same one she just*

asked Mollie about. She must have dug it out of the clothes hamper, he thought amusedly.

Delighted that Maple was following her, Maddie ran through the kitchen, into the dining room, and on into the living room, continuing to swing the sock in the air above her head—far beyond Maple’s reach. Maple suddenly noticed a much easier target: a wrinkled red jumper flapping in front of her. Leaping toward the jumper, she grabbed a mouthful. Maple began pulling and making little growling noises. Maddie felt a tug and looked down to see the hem of her beloved jumper in Maple’s mouth.

She froze in midstep, horrified. Reaching down, she grabbed the folds of her jumper and gave a sharp pull. Maple held on tight. Maddie suddenly panicked and took off running toward the couch, with Maple hanging on to the jumper. Maddie leapt for the couch and landed in the soft cushions. Everyone but Maddie heard the ripping sound. Feeling confident in the safety of the couch, she turned her attention to the puppy. Maple sat quietly near the couch, a small square of red fabric peeking out the corner of her mouth. Maddie stared in disbelief at the hole in her jumper and burst into tears. “Bad dog! She wipped my jumpah!!”

Max tried to comfort her. “Yes, I’m afraid she did. But don’t worry. I’m sure Mom can fix it for you.”

Maddie was not to be easily consoled. “I so sad! She’s a bad, bad dog.”

Max continued his efforts. “It’s okay, Maddie. Mom will take care of your jumper.” Maddie’s chubby hand reached up to her face and wiped at the tears.

At that moment, Mom came downstairs. Mitch, in his enthusiasm to be the first to tell the story, launched into an exciting account of the past few minutes—including the flying leap onto the couch. Mom took Maddie on her lap and told her how sorry she was and that she would fix the jumper.

A little later, Max, Mollie, and Mitch were making lunch, while Mom and Maddie were folding clothes in the girls' room. Today was one of the children's favorite lunches—bean burritos. Mollie heated the bean mixture on the stove, Mitch cut up lettuce, and Max worked on peeling a few oranges. "I wonder where Maple is," Mitch commented.

Max replied, "Probably in with Mom and Maddie."

Soon, the smell of beans wafted through the house. As Max washed the lunch preparation dishes and Mitch dried them, Mollie continued to stir the mixture diligently. "Are you sure you need to be watching the beans that much?" Mitch wondered as he glanced at Mollie.

"Yes. We don't like burned beans, so I have to keep close tabs on them," Mollie assured him.

Max turned off the water and grabbed a towel to dry his hands. Just then, they heard a dull thunk. Max looked at Mollie and Mitch. "What was that?"

Mitch answered, "I don't know. Maybe it was Mom and Maddie."

Max hung up the towel and suddenly burst out laughing. Maple was coming out of the back room pulling a throw rug behind her. Back arched, head down, and little paws struggling on the slippery, tile floor—she was quite a sight. Every

few moments, a vigorous shake of her small head sent ripples all the way to her tail, and she made noisy puppy growls.

At that moment, Max realized what had happened. "That's the rug where we keep her food and water bowls!" Noticing that the bowls were no longer on the rug, he hurried into the back room—but in his haste to discover Maple's mess, he failed to observe the large puddle of water on the floor. "Whooooaaa!!!" he called, arms and legs flailing helplessly as he slipped, crashing to the wet floor. Alarmed, Mollie and Mitch hurried over to Max. Maple temporarily stopped tugging on her rug and cocked her little brown head to the side, watching the children with interest.

Max slowly stood up—he was pretty wet. "Are you okay?" Mollie and Mitch wondered with concern.

"Yes," he sheepishly responded.

"What a wreck!" Mitch exclaimed. He scooped Maple up and tried to sidestep the mess as he put her outside. "Looks like we have some cleanup to do. MOMMMM! Maple spilled her food and water all over in here!" Max had already hurried off to change into dry clothes by the time Mom and Maddie appeared.

Mom shook her head. "What a puppy!"

Just then, Dad appeared as he stepped in from the garage. "Hello! I'm . . ." his voice trailed off.

"Watch it, Dad!" Mitch shouted.

Startled, Dad looked at the floor and softly whistled. "What do we have here?"