

“Max,” Mom said, “you can help me cut the bread into small pieces. We’ll have to make them extra-small since the bread’s so heavy.” After Mom and Max sliced the seasoned bread into tiny squares, Mom let each of the children try several, and then she put the remaining croutons on a pan and baked them at 200 degrees, turning them frequently, until they were crispy.

As Mom was preparing lunch, Mitch proudly showed Dad the pan of croutons. Dad popped a few into his mouth; his eyebrows raised. “Wow, these are quite strong. What sort of flavorings did you use?”

“Garlic and Italian stuff. You must have gotten one of mine!”

“I imagine so! Did you put a lot of seasoning on?”

“Yes, sir, but not on purpose. I didn’t realize the seasonings came out so fast! I learned my lesson and will be careful next time.”

Chapter 3

The First Midwife Visit

December 6th was a cold, cloudy day. Frost could be seen on the edges of the windows, and the wind could be heard rattling the shutters. Winter had definitely arrived. Inside the Moodys’ warm dining room, a breakfast of pancakes was being eaten. Mom told the children, “Dad left for work early since he’s going to take a few hours off this afternoon for my midwife appointment with Miss Carolyn. Grandpa and Grandma have offered to watch you children here, while Dad takes me to her house.”

Although normally the Moody children addressed adults by their last name, the midwife had requested that they call her “Miss” and then her first name, since she wasn’t married. Even Dad and Mom referred to her that way in conversation so as not to confuse the children.

“Great!” Mollie exclaimed.

“I want to come with you.” Maddie excitedly pumped a small hand in the air hitting the edge of the plate with her enthusiastic response. She watched in surprise as the plate became airborne and sailed to the floor. The plastic plate didn’t break, but it spun wildly in circles several times before flipping upside down.

“Oh, no!” Mitch shouted. “Maddie knocked her plate onto the floor.”

“I didn’t mean to. I weally sahwy!”

Pancake pieces, mixed with brown, sticky syrup, were now underneath Maddie’s chair. The loud noise had awakened Maple, who was napping nearby, and she scampered to the pile of pancake. She eagerly began lapping up the tasty morsels. “Oh, well,” Mom laughed. “We might as well let Maple eat it all. She’ll make cleanup easier.”

“My pancake!” Maddie wailed. “I weally weally weally hungwe! Maple ate my pancake!”

Mitch encouraged, “I can make you another one.”

“I’ll take care of the mess, Mom,” Mollie offered. “How should I deal with the syrup? Whoever put it on gave Maddie a very generous amount.”

“I did,” Mitch confessed. “Sorry.”

“That’s okay, Mitch. I’m glad you were willing to help Maddie with her breakfast. Mollie, use the cleaning spray and a rag. That should take care of it. Actually, bring back a couple of rags since it might take more than one.”

Ding dong. The doorbell was ringing! No longer concerned about her breakfast, Maddie pushed back her chair and slid down—right into the syrup. “Ohhhh. Sticky!” Her curiosity overcame her discomfort and with lightning speed she raced for the front door. “May I get it?” she called.

Mom followed her quickly. “No, Maddie. You’re not allowed to answer the door.”

In an effort to be helpful, Mitch scooped up the three-year-old, not realizing her hands were sticky. He didn’t want to get syrup on his clothes, so he swiftly, but carefully, sat Maddie down on the floor. Mom answered the door and smiled. “Good morning, Mr. Delome.”

Maddie’s small voice was heard. “Ovah heah, Mistah Lome.” Maddie happily waved her hand. “I sticky.”

Mr. Delome poked his head into the house. “I see. Did I, ah, interrupt something here? Breakfast? It smells mighty fine. I wanted to see if the boys could get my mail tomorrow. Bill and I are going on a little trip.”

“They’d be happy to. Come on in. We were finishing breakfast, but we have some extra pancakes and would love to have you join us, if you haven’t eaten yet,” Mom invited.

“To be honest, I’ve had my bowl of cereal, but a pancake would be a great treat. If I wasn’t imposing on you, I’d like to accept your offer,” Mr. Delome replied.

“Boys, please take Mr. Delome into the dining room. Maddie is sticky, so if you’ll excuse me for a minute, I need to clean her up.”

Mollie took Mr. Delome’s coat and hung it in the closet. Mr. Delome followed Max and Mitch. “Watch your step. Maddie dumped her plate on the floor, so it’s a real mess,” Mitch explained. “Maple ate the pancake. Mollie was going to wipe up the syrup when the doorbell rang.”

Mr. Delome carefully felt his chair to make sure it was clean before he sat down. “Those pancakes look delicious.” Remembering Mr. Delome’s taste for peanut butter on pancakes, Max brought the peanut butter jar to the table.

Soon, Maddie bounded downstairs, ready to eat again. Mitch buttered a not-so-warm pancake for Maddie, putting less syrup on it this time. Max stacked the dirty plates and silverware while Mollie began washing dishes. “Mr. Delome, when are you going to get the side of your house fixed?” Max inquired.

“Pretty soon, I think. Bill has been looking into it for me. I didn’t have insurance.”

It wasn’t long before Maddie had finished her breakfast and the kitchen was clean—without any further excitement. Mr. Delome announced that it was time for him to get back home. After he left, the children did their morning chores and then prepared for school. As Mollie was taking dirty clothes downstairs, the phone rang. Mom answered it in her bedroom.

Several minutes later, Mom found Max and Mitch doing their school in the living room while Mollie practiced the piano. Mollie stopped when she saw Mom. “That was Miss Carolyn,” Mom informed them. “She said she’s going to make a home visit to a mom who had a baby last week. The lady only lives five minutes from us, so Miss Carolyn said she’d stop by and do the appointment at our house. I told her that would be great.”

“I can’t wait to see her. I only remember a little of her from when Maddie was born!” Mollie beamed. “May we help clean or do anything to help you get ready, Mom?”

“Not at the moment. There’ll be a few things to do, but we’ll have time after morning school is finished.”

Mom and Maddie worked on ABC flashcards while Max, Mollie, and Mitch continued with their morning school-work. Around 11:30, Mom went into the kitchen and felt the pita pockets that were defrosting on the counter. “Good. They’re almost thawed. Maddie, time to help Mom make lunch,” she instructed. Maddie put the plates and napkins on the table while Mom peeled some fruit.

“I’m home,” Dad announced as he walked into the kitchen. He gave Mom a kiss and picked Maddie up. “How’s my little girl?”

“I got all sticky. I fell into my pancake. It was teabble.”

“Really? Now how did that happen?” Dad asked as Mitch came flying into the room. Mitch proceeded to give a rapid rundown of the entire story. “I’m glad everyone took care of you, Maddie.” Dad said, setting Maddie on her chair. Turning to Mom, he questioned, “Are we ready to eat?”

“I think so.”

“Max, Mollie. Lunchtime!” Dad called.

Within a few minutes, the family was gathered around the table. Dad prayed and asked the Lord to bless their food, and the meal began. Mom had set out pita fillings in separate dishes: chili, cheese, and lunch meat. After finishing the