

*The Adventures*  
*of*  
*Princess Pearl*  
**P.O.W.E.R. Girl!**

**Book One**

**Tonja K. Taylor**

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**The Adventures of Princess Pearl, P.O.W.E.R.  
(Purposeful Operations With Eternal Rewards) Girl!**  
by Tonja K. Taylor. Book One of the *P.O.W.E.R. Girl* series.

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*A portion of the income from these books (after the tithe) goes to support organizations throughout the world that **promote the Good News of Jesus Christ our LORD the King!** See the back of the book for a list of many other works by Tonja K. Taylor.*

For more information or to order books, contact Tonja at: **snowwaterspublishing@gmail.com** or at **www.womenspeakers.com/united-states/texarkana/speaker/tonja-taylor.**

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## DEDICATION

“So I answered them and said to them,  
**‘The God of heaven will give us  
success; therefore we His servants  
will arise and build...’**”

—Nehemiah 2:20, NASB

This book is dedicated first to the LORD  
—my very patient, wise, and all-knowing  
Father, Who understood that, eventually, I  
would overcome my fears of failure *and*  
success, and work with Him to birth the  
many books, songs, and other creative  
works He has given me to help this world  
know Him.

I also dedicate ***P.O.W.E.R. Girl!*** to my  
darling husband, Clayton, who helped me  
design the cover and edit the files, and has  
prayed and encouraged me to believe in  
my calling to write. Our daughter,  
Victoria, helped me edit earlier versions  
and basically created Robin. Thanks,  
Sweetie!

I also dedicate this to my parents,  
reviewers, and friends, who are great  
cheerleaders and have prayed for my  
success!

I love and thank you all, and believe that  
you get credit in Heaven for every person  
whose life is changed by this and the  
upcoming works.

**What Others are Saying About  
*Princess Pearl, P.O.W.E.R. Girl!***

*Tonja,*

*Honesty, when I first got it, I thought, O Lord! I can't do this right now, we are swamped! But I really felt I needed to do it and the grace was present to do it....it was easy and frankly, a pleasant read—be sure and let me know when they are printed. I will buy one for Brailee. May God richly bless this book—far beyond what you can imagine.*

—**Kim Potter, Director of A New Thing Ministries, TN [www.anewthingministries.com](http://www.anewthingministries.com)**

*Tonja,*

I had to get my oil changed today, so I took your manuscript on my Kindle and read. I love it! Even as an adult, I can't wait to read more! I found only one typo, you wrote "other" at one point where you meant, "mother".

I can't believe how thorough you are. Your scenes are enticing and you have excellently woven background into the progress of the story. So far, I have no critique at all on the content, characterization and progression. I'm so honored that you're allowing me to read it and offer feedback in this early stage. Very, very well done, Sister!

Love you,

Abby Kelly (Michigan)

[abbykelly1980@gmail.com](mailto:abbykelly1980@gmail.com)

[The Predatory Lies of Anorexia: A Survivor's Story](#)

**Enjoyed reading the book. Loved getting to know  
Pearl and see how she grows spiritually.**

—Emily Oglesby, Librarian, Trinity Christian  
School, Texarkana, AR

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*Dear Reader,*

This nameless poem has inspired me,  
and now I share it with you:

**To each one is given a marble  
to carve for the wall  
A stone that is needed to  
heighten the beauty of all;  
And only your soul has the  
'magic' to give it grace,  
And only our hands the  
cunning to put it in place.**

**Yes, the task that is given to  
each, no other can do  
So the errand is waiting; it  
has waited through ages for you.  
And now you appear, and the  
hushed ones are turning their gaze  
To see what you do with your  
chance in the chamber of days.**

—Edith Hyman, quoted in *The Promotable Woman*

We pray the LORD will use this book as a powerful catalyst in the life of your **P.O.W.E.R. Princess(es)** and the rest of your family to deepen your love and understanding of His Word, and cause your light to go forth so that others may see and draw closer to Jesus, the True Life (John 10:10).

“Mother,” announced ten-year-old Pearl one day, “I wanna be a princess.”

Her eyes shone as she stood up straighter and said, “I want to wear a royal gown and a royal robe, with rainbows full of sparkles and waterfalls of glittering gold, and a royal crown full of beautiful jewels. I want to sleep in a big, high royal bed with lots of soft mattresses—you know, like in the story. And I want to have a little royal pooch—with a ‘tude, but sweet too.”

“I want to ride a royal horse, white and tall and splendid,” she said, dancing around on her tippy-toes. “I want to go on royal adventures to the beach and the mountains and the forest and the mall and by car and train and plane and bicycle, and treat my friends to royal feasts, and say, ‘Won’t you please come to tea?’”

Her mother nodded, so Pearl continued.

“And Mother, please,” she said, then remembered to slow down to sound more royal. “I want my own wing of the palace, for a Princess needs her privacy, you know.”

“Oh, really?” said her mother, and chuckled a bit. “Is that all?”

“That’s all. For now,” said Pearl.

Her mother smiled and bent down to look into her daughter’s earnest eyes.

“Ah, my sweet Pearl, now I see. It is time for you to meet the King.”

“The King?” Pearl felt a lot excited, but a little nervous also. *There must be more to this princess thing than I thought.*

“Yes. He is a good king. The best king. You must meet him and learn his ways, for it’s the only way to be a true ***Princess of P.O.W.E.R.!***”

Pearl paused. “When can I start?”

“Right now,” said her mother, as she walked to the desk. “Your dad and I will teach you. The first step is to look into ***The Royal Book***. It will show you how to be the best kind of Princess there is—and that is ***a Princess of Purposeful Operations With Eternal Rewards!***”

***For the kingdom of God consists of and is based on not talk but power (moral power and excellence of soul).***  
— I Corinthians 4:20 (AMPC)

## **P.O.W.E.R Princess Creed**

**Princess, the Power to change things is in your hand. *What will you do with this Power?***

**As a Princess of P.O.W.E.R.:**

- **I believe** in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the righteous King of the universe. He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again and lives forever in Heaven at the right hand of God (John 3:16, Matt. 28:6).
- **I believe** Jesus appeared on earth, then went back to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God the Father and always prays for us (Romans 8:34), and that He is coming again soon as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to gather to Himself those who have accepted Him into their hearts.
- **I have asked** forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I pledge my allegiance to Him—to the Lamb of God slain for my sins and those of every person.

**As a Princess of P.O.W.E.R., I agree to do these things to guard and strengthen my heart:**

- **Read my Bible daily**, thank God for it, memorize Scriptures, and share with others what God teaches me. If I don't know where

to start, I will read in Psalms, Proverbs, and John. God will help me.

- **Invite my dear Father God** to be involved in every part of my day and help me do right.
- **Ask Him to give me wisdom** in everything I do, including choosing the right friends, and thank Him daily for this amazing life!
- **Purposely listen** to, watch, read, and play things that glorify Him and stay away from things and people that are against God and His ways, for that will help me be successful (Joshua 1:8).
- **Regularly attend a Bible-believing church** and other Christian activities. I will go with my family or will pray for the LORD to give me someone I trust to take me.
- **Ask God how to use my gifts**, talents, strengths, opportunities, dreams and possessions to advance His Kingdom, for He gave me all I have, and all I have is His.
- **Remember that** I work for ***G.O.D.—Global Operations Dominion.***
- **Encourage other princesses** to dare to follow King Jesus, read His Word, love others, and become a **Princess of P.O.W.E.R.!**

**Now, GO FORTH and CONQUER,  
*Princess of P.O.W.E.R.!***

---

(Sign your name here, Princess!)

---

Date

## Chapter One — The Little Treehouse

“Aarf! Aarf!” barked the little dog, pacing nervously around the base of the tree.

Pearl rushed to the edge of the new treehouse and smiled down at her puppy.

“Hush, **Vivace!** I’m writing and I need quiet right now. I’ll get you in a bit. This is too high for you, but just right for me.”

Uncle Burt’s German shepherd ran over to see what was going on. Vivace looked like a bit of dancing black fluff next to him, but the dogs got along well together.

“By the way, Viv, I’ll be up here a lot, so don’t get lonely.”

“Watchman,” she said to the other dog, “I know you’re watching too, like your name says!”

He looked up at her and calmly barked once, as if to say, “You bet!”

Vivace whined a little and sniffed Watchman's feet, but Pearl knew her little dog would be all right.

Pearl heard a bluebird's happy call, and saw a tiny flash of blue dart into a tree nearby. "Oh, thank You, LORD! You know how I love bluebirds—they just remind me of Your sweetness!"

She sat down and turned her new journal different ways. The silver holographic cover caught the **light, reflecting changing rainbows** of colors and shapes that amazed her, like the many parts of God.

"For my favorite writer after God," Aunt Beth had told her. "A new journal for a new life."

Pearl liked Aunt Beth's warm hugs. And she always smelled good.

"I'll miss you, Princess," Aunt Beth had told her, "but I know the mail goes to **the hills of Arkansas**. You know I don't text, but you can do the old-fashioned thing and call me!"

She'd talk to Aunt Beth soon, but first, she wanted to write to her BIFF.

On the inside cover of her journal, she wrote, *My New Life by Princess Pearl*, and put the date.

*Dear Jesus, My Best Invisible Friend Forever!*

*Sorry it took me a whole day to even write you, 'cause I didn't know where this was at first with all the boxes and stuff when we got here yesterday! Then we went out to eat 'cause even Uncle Burt was too tired to cook, but You know that don't You?*

*Queen Mother says You knew all this was going to happen, cause You know everything and are never surprised. She says that's good because You work it together somehow and make it all turn out all right for us Your kids and that only You can do that, 'cause You're God—**The God of P.O.W.E.R.!***

*But how do You do that?*

*Anyway, I'm so glad You know what's going on. You know things have been kinda crazy down here lately. But I like our new home. And thanks for having Uncle Burt build my **la casita de arbol**—my special place to talk to You.*

*And thanks for great weather to be outside. And for making bluebirds!*

*It's really neat to message you anytime without a cell phone. too! Kinda like Super-text, or something! But I still want one. Can You please tell Queen Mother that? I don't need one with You, but I think a P.O.W.E.R. Princess like me needs one, huh?*

From her pocket, she pulled out the P.O.W.E.R. Princess Vision List that her dad had helped her write. At the top, from the Royal Book, he had written **Nehemiah 2:20**, “**The God of Heaven will give you success.**”

She hesitated, holding it close to her heart. *So much has changed—*

“Daddy God gives us what we want, when we obey Him,” he’d told her. “**Psalm 37:4**—and having *you* for a precious daughter was high on my Vision List, Princess!”

A tear rolled down her right cheek. She squeezed the paper, remembering his voice. She could see his earnest face, and his bright smile. “*We P.O.W.E.R. People still hurt sometimes,*” he’d said.

*“But then we give the hurt to our Big Bro, Jesus. And He gives us His peace. He holds us close and reminds us of all the good things, and there are many good things.”*

“Yes, Daddy,” she whispered. “Love you!”

She opened the list. “Okay,” she said out loud. “I still don’t have the royal gown or robe or crown. I only have one mattress too, right now—but it’s soft. But I *do* have Vivace!”

She put a checkmark next to *'royal pooch, with a tude, but sweet too.'*

She looked at the rest of her list. *I still want to ride a Lipizzan, and go on adventures. But I'll get to do some of those on trail rides and such—maybe this week, if Queen Mother will let me!*

She heard Vivace bark, then she felt a sting on her arm and saw a pebble bounce. Another flew by and almost hit her eye.

She looked over the edge. “Robert!” she said. “Stop! Go back to your own tree house and leave me alone!”

Robert scowled at her from the ground as he waved Vivace away. “Down, dog!” He looked back up and stuck out his tongue. “Who are you talking to? And Mom says set the table! Now!”

He scratched Watchman’s ears. “You’re a real dog!” he said.

“All right, Robert Redhead,” Pearl said. “Be nice to my dog. And go away. And stop throwing rocks!”

“Your dog looks like a stupid dirty mop!” he said, and threw one more stone at her, then ran into the house. Watchman trotted after him.

*Brat! Ugh!* “I am soooooo glad I have my own room and treehouse now! Ignore him, Vivace!” she said, and whistled to her dog. “You are my *beeoooteeful* puppy, so just forgive Robert, okay?”

*Daddy God, how long before we build our new house, so I can get away from him? It's on my Vision List! Why does that brat have to be in my family?*

She scooted back from the edge and wrote again. *Somebody in some faraway country needs a little brother! Maybe the mailman can pick him up today!*

*She felt a bit guilty. “Sorry, Daddy God—help Robert be nicer! If Daddy was here—“*

Her tears dropped onto the paper, smearing the ink a bit. *Okay, Jesus, please take this hurt and help my heart....*

Then she had a happy thought. “Daddy would love to be here with me, wouldn’t he, Jesus? He would sit with me and watch the leaves dance in the breeze and talk about how pretty they are, and listen with me to the waterfalls in the fountain. But he is having even more fun with You in Heaven, right?”

She giggled. “Hey Jesus, if Daddy is riding his motorcycle in Heaven then he can go fast and not have to worry about being run over like here on earth,

right, ‘cause it’s Heaven, and like he said, there are no limits?”

“Or maybe he’s riding **one of Your beautiful white horses that You have up there, like the one You’ll come back on—like a Lipizzan, only better.** And I bet it goes faster than a motorcycle, like the wind—“

She remembered seeing the magnificent white horses a few years before. “Oh yeah, I need to put that on my Vision List, too, right?”

She added *riding lessons* to her List, then tried to draw a horse in her journal. She stopped, frustrated. *It looks like a cat! I need lessons—fast. Maybe **Queen Mother** will let me print off a horse from the computer for now. A white one.*

She added *drawing lessons* to her list.

She looked up again and said, “That reminds me, Jesus—I’d like a horse to ride down here, too, please. I know Uncle Burt has some, but I want a girl horse, please. And how about jumping lessons, okay?” She wrote *art lessons* and *girl horse of my own* to her List.

She jumped as she heard her mother’s voice. “Pearl! I need you down right now.”

“Whoops! I forgot,” said Pearl, as she grabbed her pen and journal and hurried to climb down. “Sorry,

Queen Mother. I was just enjoying my *la casita del arbol*—that’s what Uncle Burt said it was—and writing—“

“Yes ma’am,” her mother interrupted, as she petted Vivace. “But the instruction was to set the table.”

Pearl ran to her mom and took the puppy, hugging her close. “I miss Daddy.”

Her mother’s voice was tender as she hugged her daughter. “Yes, Precious. I know. Me too.”

She pulled back from Pearl to look into her eyes, and said in a lighter tone, “But you know your dad would want you to help me and be on time, hmm? Besides, we have special guests tonight.”

Pearl grinned and said, “Special guests? Cool! Who?” She sniffed the air. “Wow, Uncle Burt’s grilling, huh? I bet he’s a good cook!”

“Yes, he is a good cook, and I’m glad he likes to do it. Our secret guests will be here soon, so you need to change clothes.”

They started walking to the patio door. “I’ll set an extra place with the good stuff,” said Pearl. “And it’s Robert’s turn to stack the dishwasher, right?”

Her mother laughed. “You’re very good at keeping up with his turns to do things! But you’re right. Also, you need to set three extra places, then feed Vivace and change. Be sure and wash your hands, then you can also help me frost the cake.”

“Italian cream, with three layers?”

“You know it!”

“I love **Italian cream cake!**”

“No, Pearl, you love God,” her mother said gently. “You *really like to eat* Italian cream cake. See the difference?”

Pearl laughed. “How about both?”

Her mother smiled and hugged her as they approached the door.

Pearl was so happy. *What a day. And it's not over yet!*



## Chapter Two — Special Guests

Pearl put Vivace down and washed her hands in the kitchen sink, singing like her mother had taught her to do. “Happy birthday to You, happy birthday to You. We love You dear Jesus, You’re always true!”

“Pearl, get the big blue plates out of the hutch and put them on the dining table in the next room.”

“Yes ma’am. Good thing Uncle Burt thinks big!” said Pearl, as she dried her hands then carefully pulled out seven deep blue plates. “Wow, these are so pretty!”

“You’re right, because I have no clue right now where our dishes are, and we’d be eating on paper plates if he didn’t have these!” her mother said. “And please get the salad plates too, Sweetie. Put them at the left top of the big plates. You know how to do it!”

“Yes ma’am,” said Pearl, as she walked into the adjoining room and carefully placed the plates.

Vivace followed her. “No Vivace, I know this is your first day, too, but go back,” she said, and pointed. The dog whined a bit, but returned. She heard her mother

tell Vivace to sit on the blanket in the corner of the kitchen.

Pearl admired the small chandelier over the table. It had many teardrop-shaped pieces that reflected the light shining through the big window and produced little rainbows on the floor.

But back to the dinner. The guests would be here any minute! “Queen Mother, Uncle Burt’s at the end, right? Where do you want to sit? And do we get to use cloth napkins tonight?”

“Yes, he’ll be the head of the table, and you and Robert and I will sit on his left side. They’re in the drawer. Bring them and I’ll show you how to fold them to go into the rings.”

Pearl opened the hutch drawer and got the lovely navy blue and white cloth napkins. “Wow, this is fancy! It’s a good thing Uncle Burt must have known that he’d have lots of company one day! So who’s coming?”

“Special friends of his from church,” said her mother, as she demonstrated **how to fold the napkins**. “He wanted us to meet each other, and thought today was as good as any.”

“Are there kids? And can we go to church there?”  
Pearl folded the rest of the napkins and put them in the silver rings.

Her mother smiled as she opened the silverware drawer and gathered forks, spoons, and knives. “The guests are a surprise. We will visit the church, and see if that’s where God wants us. Even though it may seem to make sense to go a certain place or do a certain thing, **we need to check with Daddy God first**, for He knows everything.”

She pointed toward the cabinet. “Now, if you will get down those lovely blue glasses and put ice in them, I’ll go ask Burt if the steaks are ready. Also, put the dressing and chopped walnuts and cranberries in a bowl and put them on the table for the salad. And you can make sure the oven’s on 200 degrees to keep the potatoes warm,” she said, and headed for the door.

“Mmm—the **super-duper potatoes?**”

“Yes ma’am, loaded. But with *organic* butter, *organic* cheese, and *organic* **kefir**, and turkey bacon!”

“Yum! I’m glad we’re having company tonight!”

Pearl found a pretty glass bowl and poured the walnuts and cranberries into it. “Oh, Daddy God, this is so cool,” she said, carrying them to the table.  
“Visitors our second day! Thank you! And, I’m

excited. I hope I make some new friends!” She checked the oven, then remembered she needed to go change clothes.

She ran upstairs to her room and looked through the clothes they had managed to hang in the closet earlier in the day. She put on a pair of her new jeans and a sparkly fuchsia top.

“Fuschia is the color of joy,” her daddy had told her years ago. It had been her favorite color since then.

She grabbed her journal and wrote, *Dear Daddy God, I am so excited! And maybe there will be kids to play with!* She added, *New friends—girls, please!* onto her List.

She started to run downstairs, then realized she was barefoot. She knew her mother would want her to wear shoes for company. She looked through a box and found her sparkly blue flip-flops, then dashed to the bathroom to wash her face and brush her hair. She smiled at herself in the mirror. “You look like a good friend!” she told herself, and went back downstairs.

“Ah, there’s my favorite niece in the whole universe!” said her Uncle, carrying a big plate of grilled steaks. “Pardon me, Charlotte,” he told Pearl’s mother as she tossed the salad, “comin’ through!”

Pearl grabbed her uncle's legs—he was so tall!—and gave them a big hug. “Mmmm, Uncle Burt, can we eat now?”

“Sweetie, Risa and her family will be here in about five minutes. You can wait that long, right?”

“Risa! That's a pretty name. So she's a girl!”

Her uncle laughed, and put the steaks down and covered them up. “Yes! Go get Rob for me, okay?”

“Do I have to? He's been so mean to me today!”

“Pearl,” said her mother, “you know all these changes have been very hard on Robert—“

“Well, that doesn't mean he's gotta be bad!”

“Pearl,” said her mother more firmly, “go get your brother like your uncle said. Now. And be nice. I expect you to both have big smiles on your face for our company. You will be nice to them and each other—understand?”

“Yes ma'am,” Pearl mumbled and headed up the stairs. “At least we have our own rooms now!”

She went to Robert's room. Boxes were everywhere and it looked like he'd been rooting through them. Clothes and toys were scattered across the bed, on the

floor, and across the boxes. “Robert, you Tasmanian Devil!” she said. “Come down for dinner. The guests will be here in a minute.”

There was no answer. “Don’t play with me, Bub—“  
She heard a splash and Robert’s snicker.

“Oh no!” *This better not be what it sounds like!*

She opened the bathroom door, and there was her little brother, water all over his clothes and on the floor, as he pushed several of his toys underwater, with the tub almost full.

“Oh my gosh, Robert! Go get changed, ‘cause our guests are almost here. Hurry up!”

He stuck out his tongue at her.

She turned and ran into her uncle who had just come up the stairs. He laughed when he saw Robert, and shook his head.

“You are one busy seven-year-old, Rob,” he said calmly. “Buddy, I need you to let the water out and change like your sissy said. Your new friends will want to meet you, so let’s get you ready, okay?”

Robert lit up. “Hey Uncle Burt! Wanna play?”

“Pearl, go tell your mom I’ll be right down,” said Burt. “And don’t tell her about the mess. I know she told Rob he could play with his toys, she just didn’t know how creative he would be in a new environment!”

“Okay, but Robert, Mom says you have *be nice* to me and the new people!” Pearl zipped downstairs before her brother could reply.

Her mother was using the ice maker on the refrigerator to put crushed ice into the blue glasses. “Where are the guys?”

“They’ll be right down,” said Pearl. “Can I help you with the cake and get a spoonful of frosting?”

“It’s right there,” said her mom, pointing. The cake towered three tiers high.

“Mmm! Looks delicious!” said Pearl.

“Burt helped me. He ground up some of the **fresh pecans** from his trees. Just one small spoonful, cause you know it’s not good for you to have too much sugar.”

Pearl opened the lid and dug in. “Thank you, and I bet the guests will love your cake.”

“Good job, Princess,” she said, and hugged her. “You have been such a blessing to me during this whole move. And thank you for all your help with dinner tonight.”

“Love you,” Pearl said, and hugged her back. Her mother smelled so good, with the gentle perfume she wore.

“Are you always going to call me that? How about just ‘Mom,’ like you used to?”

Pearl started to answer. “I just—“

“Hey Mom! Look at me!”

She saw Burt come down the stairs, with a dry Robert on his shoulders, leaning back so he wouldn’t scrape the doorway as his uncle walked into the kitchen.

“Son, that’s quite a growth spurt!” she joked.

“Does that mean his brain is growing too?” Pearl said.

Her mother shot her a look that was half amused and half stern.

“Remember, Pearl, **a P.O.W.E.R. Princess watches her words and speaks kind things, like the Royal Book says,**” her mother said, adopting a queenly-

sounding voice. “If thou cannot speaketh anything nice, thou shouldst not speak.”

“Yeah, Thumper said it in *Bambi*,” Pearl said. *Help me, LORD!*

They heard Watchman’s strong bark. “Ah, there’s our guests, I bet!” said Burt. “Let’s go say hi.”

Robert snickered. “I’ll wave at them from up here!”

The bell rang, and Vivace barked and ran in, sniffing the door.

Pearl felt a little nervous, but excited. “Daddy God, help me say and do right!” she whispered under her breath. “And thank You for all of these new good things, like **Jeremiah 29:11** says!”



### Chapter Three — Steak and Spanish

The door opened to a lovely Latino woman with a big smile and a basket overflowing with goodies. A teenage girl and younger boy were behind her, also holding gifts.

“Risa, Robin, Lucas!” said Burt, all smiles. “So good to see you all! Come in and I’ll introduce you!”

Watchman was behind them, tail wagging. The boy reached down and patted him on the head.

As they came in, Lucas pointed to Robert, who was still perched on his uncle’s shoulders and resting his chin on Burt’s head.

“New hat?” said Lucas, and everyone laughed.

“I just picked it up today,” quipped Burt.

“You are so funny!” said Robin, and giggled as she gently poked him in the arm. She waved up at Robert, then walked over to Pearl. “You must be the princess!”

“I am,” said Pearl, in her best royal voice. She took Robin’s hand. “I am Princess Ariel Dominique Walker. But please call me Pearl, as in, **Pearl of great price.**”

Vivace barked, dancing around their feet. Pearl reached down and picked her up.

“*Igualmente!*” said Risa, in a lovely Spanish accent.

“It means, ‘likewise, pleased to meet you.’”

“Oh, are you bilingual?”

“Yes,” said Risa. “All three of us are. It’s just practical.”

“I can speak some Spanish,” said Pearl, and giggled. “*La casita de arbol!*”

Risa smiled. “*Muy bien*—Very good! And I hear you like your little tree house.”

“Yes, it’s super! Uncle Burt built me and Robert our own, and I’m so glad!”

“Yes, Burt is a really great person,” she said, and smiled at him. “He’s told us lots of good things about you guys, so we brought special gifts to celebrate your new life!” She handed the big basket to Pearl’s mother.

“How thoughtful!” she said. “Thank you!”

“For Princess Pearl,” said Robin, “a necklace.” She handed Pearl a dainty box of deep blue satin. Inside was a delicate chain with a tiny silver dove.

“Oh, I love doves!” said Pearl. “They’re so gentle, and remind me of the Holy Spirit. Thank you!” *Wow, Daddy God, she thought. You worked fast with my Vision List—number whatever it was—for new friends, and one is a girl!*

Burt let Robert down off his shoulders, and Lucas handed him a box.

“Hey! It’s a monster truck!” Robert said, tearing into the box. “Mom, can I play now?”

“What do you say?” prompted his mother.

“Uncle Burt, can I chase cows with it?” Robert smiled as wide as he could and raised his eyebrows up and down in anticipation.

“Robert, you know what I mean,” said his mother. Everyone laughed with her.

“Oh, yeah—thank you!” said Robert. He waved at Risa. “Thank you lots!”

His mother hugged him. “Good job, Rob!”

“Why don’t you guys let us take your jackets for the coat closet, and you can wash up,” said Burt. “Dinner and dessert are ready, and we can talk about all this at the table.”

When everyone was seated, Burt blessed the food.

“Dear Father in Heaven, thank You for all Your goodness to us, and for this delicious food You have provided. We thank You that it will nourish our bodies and do us only good. Thank You for new adventures in our lives—new friendships formed tonight, and the discovery of new plans You have for us. You are so good! We bless Your Name forever, and in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.”

Vivace, at Pearl’s feet, made a noise as if she agreed.

“Amen!” Pearl said. “Pass the mega-tatos, please! And the bacon and the butter and the cheese and the sour cream. Yum!” She looked at her dog and whispered, “If you’re quiet, I’ll slip you a bite!”

Robin handed her the potatoes and said, “Hey, maybe we can walk our dogs together.”

“Yeah! When can we start? Vivace would love that!” said Pearl.

“It depends on our schedules, Sweetie,” said her mother. “We’ve got to get this house in order first.”

And remember, that's healthy *organic* bacon and butter and cheese and sour cream. It costs more, but you're worth it!"

"As long as it tastes good!" said Burt.

"Can we help you with anything?" Risa said. "Thanks for having us over. We're so glad you guys are here."

"Thank you!" said Pearl's mother. "That means a lot. And I'm sure your prayers have made this transition much easier than it would have been without them." She took a sip of tea. "What time is Bible study Sunday?"

"Nine-thirty, and Pearl would be in my class. We're learning about harvest. And that reminds me—the Hallelujah Harvest Hayride and Festival is the Saturday before October 31."

"Cool!" said Pearl, after hurriedly swallowing a big bite of potato.

"We also have **AWANA** on Wednesdays," said Risa.

"AWANA is definitely something Pearl and Robert need. They learned quite a few Scriptures in that club at our old church."

"Yes, it's fun!" said Pearl. "May I have one of your delicious steaks, Uncle Burt?"

“Yes, Darlin’. Here’s the steak sauce to go with it.”

“Mmm!” Pearl got a small one and cut into it. “If there’s any fat or anything, Vivace, you can have it,” she told the dog, now lying on her feet.

Vivace whacked her tail and licked Pearl’s shoe.

“Pearl, don’t throw anything on Uncle Burt’s floor—you know better than that,” said her mother. “Put it in her dish in the utility room.”

Pearl nodded, her mouth full.

“Pass the salad, please,” said Lucas.

“All he eats lately is salad,” said Risa. “I thought boys ate more!”

“Just wait till he gets to be a teenager,” said Burt. “Or at least I remember Mama complaining that I’d eat her and Dad out of house and home.”

“That’s what they said,” agreed Pearl’s mother. “And I think you almost did!”

Robert looked confused. “You were eating the cabinets and stuff?”

“It’s just a saying, Robert,” said his mother. “But he did eat like a horse!”

Burt pretended to whinny, and Pearl said, “Hey! Can we ride horses tomorrow?”

“Not until we get this house in order,” her mother said. “But perhaps next weekend.”

“Well now, everybody needs a break, Charlotte,” said Burt. “Why don’t you let the kids get their rooms straight in the morning, then let them ride in the afternoon? You could take a break yourself—maybe even a nap.”

“I don’t want to get behind,” she replied. “I told my clients that I’d be out two weeks to pack and move and get settled, but I don’t want to keep them waiting.”

“Please, Queen Mother?” said Pearl, in her sweetest voice. “We can just ride an hour or two and then come back to help you.”

Burt turned to Risa, who sat on his right. “Would you like to bring the kids? They’ll have to double up for now, but the horses won’t mind. They are both gentle mares and they like kids. The man I bought them from had five and he said they’d make noise and climb all over those horses and it didn’t bother them at all!”

“That sounds like fun!” said Robin.

“Yeah! Whoopee! Uncle Burt, can we go on a trail ride?” said Pearl.

“I don’t know much about *caballos*,” Lucas said.

“What’s that?” said Pearl.

“Spanish for horses,” Risa replied.

“I’ll show you, Lucas!” said Robert.

“Robert,” said Pearl, “you don’t know much, dear.”

“Do too! I’ve seen pictures!”

“Burt,” said Pearl’s mother, “They aren’t ready for a trail ride yet. I’d feel better if you just walked them around the pasture first, and taught them how to put on the blanket and saddle and how to sit and such.”

“Deal,” said Burt. “We’ll start after lunch tomorrow. Now, please pass the baked beans!”

Pearl was thrilled. *Wow, Daddy God! This is only the second day and it just gets better. I can’t wait to see what You have for us tomorrow!*

## Chapter Four — Unpacking

“Sleep well, Princess?” asked Burt, walking into the kitchen.

“Yes Sir, and thank you for the pancakes,” Pearl said, getting up and taking her dishes to the sink. “You are a good cook!”

“Yes he is!” said her mother. “Now please get Rob and we’ll all talk to Aunt Beth—she’s probably wondering why we haven’t called her yet!—and then you can help him straighten his room.”

“But I was going to do mine,” said Pearl. “Besides, he’s mean.”

“Pearl, I said go get Robert, right now. He is quite a bit younger than you and I want you to help him. *Thank you,*” said her mother, as she stacked dishes in the dishwasher. “Remember, you are a *P.O.W.E.R. Princess*. You know how to act.”

Pearl sighed, knowing from her mother’s tone that the discussion was over. “Yes ma’am. Can I turn up the praise music while I help him, please?”

“Okay, just not too loud. Come down quickly and we’ll call, then you can show Rob how to put things up. When you guys are done, let me know and I’ll come look. If you think something needs to be moved, call me. I don’t want you and Robert to hurt yourselves.”

“Okay, Queen Mother. Love you.” Pearl gave her a quick hug, then went upstairs and turned up the peppy praise music on **KLOVE**, her favorite Christian radio station. She danced around the room a little. “Jesus, please help me be nice to Robert. You know how he is!” said Pearl, then went to help him.

His door was open, and when she walked in, she saw a mess, but no little brother. “Rob—” Pearl stopped. She’d been about to make a rude comment, but she felt like she should not say that. *Thank You, Jesus. You are already helping me!*

“Bub,” she said kindly. “Where are you? Let’s go call Aunt Beth, and then I will help you get your room done, so you’ll have more time to play.”

She heard a noise, and figured out it was coming from his closet. She opened the door, and he was on the floor, trying to drive his remote control truck up the wall. “Hey, Rob, do you like your toy?”

“Nope, but I’m tryin’!” he said.

“You know Queen Mother told us to clean up our rooms,” she said. *LORD, help me to be patient with him.* “First we’ll go down and talk to Aunt Beth on the phone,” she said softly, “then we’ll clean your room, so we can ride horses this afternoon.”

“Aunt Beth!” he said, and threw down his truck remote. “Horses! I can really ride one? By myself?”

Pearl felt good about being nice to him. “That’s what they said. Hey, wanna ride piggy back first to practice? Get on and I’ll take you downstairs!”

“Really?” She thought she saw some joy in his eyes, and it was good to see his grin.

She knelt down. “Sure. Hop on to this horse, cowboy!”

He jumped onto her back.

“Oomph!” she said, and stood up, trying not to say anything rude. “Are you ready?”

“Sure!” He kicked her sides a bit with his heels. “C’mon, horsey! Let’s go!”

“Ouch, Robert, please be easy on your horsey, OK?” She stood up with him and started out the door.

He hugged her neck, and petted her head. “Sorry, horsey. You are a good horsey!”

*A P.O.W.E.R. Princess is strong*, thought Pearl. She adjusted Robert and made a whinny sound. *As strong as a horse!* She giggled at her own joke.

“What’s funny?” Rob said, as Pearl stepped carefully down the stairs, balancing the extra weight on her back.

“I’m just having fun, Rob,” she said. “I love you.”

“Love you too, Sissy.”

*Now why can't he be like that all the time?* She squeezed his leg gently.

When they got to the kitchen, their mother was already on the phone. “Yes, they are doing really well, and we thank you for your prayers, Sis!”

She put Beth on speaker phone. “Hey kids! I miss you!” said their aunt. “But I know you’ll love it there, and thanks for helping your mom and Uncle Burt.”

“Yes ma’am,” said Pearl.

“Yep,” said Robert.

“It’s ‘yes’ Rob, remember?” said Pearl.

Beth laughed. “Pearl, I do believe you will be a teacher when you grow up.”

“She already is!” said her mother, and laughed. “She hugged Pearl, who knelt to let Robert off her back.

“She’s a good leader,” Pearl’s mother said. “And she’s doing better at being sweeter.”

*A P.O.W.E.R. Princess is wise, thought Pearl. And kind.*

“Good job, Pearl. I’m very proud of you,” said Beth. “You’ve been a trooper through all this, and I know you are a huge blessing to your mom and uncle. By the way, have you guys found the right church yet?”

Pearl’s mother laughed. “Beth! We just got here a couple days ago! But yes, we will be visiting Burt’s this weekend. We’ll be helping his friend Risa and her kids with the Hallelujah Hayride, too. So God is working speedily.”

“Yes, and I’ll be a scary crow!” said Robert.

Pearl giggled. “Rob, you mean a scarecrow, right? Although you can be pretty scary sometimes!”

Her mother shook her head, and smiled. Pearl heard Aunt Beth laugh. “You guys seem to be settling in

very quickly and well. God is so amazing. Well, I've got to go, but thanks. I'm glad to know the phones work in Arkansas, too! Love you, and hey, send me pics online, OK? Especially of the Buffalo River. I've wanted to go white-water rafting there for years!"

Pearl laughed. "Hey! Let's all go! It will be fun!"

"Uploading pics and sending them online can be a homeschool lesson for Pearl, I guess." said her mom. "We'll have to think about the rafting. Love ya!"

She disconnected and turned to Pearl. "Now, clean up time, kiddos! Take the stuff out of the boxes and put it on the bed. It will be easier to sort that way."

"Let's go, Rob," Pearl said. She tousled his hair. "I'll help you."

"Stop!" he said, pushing her hand off his head. He took off and ran up the stairs. "I'll beat you!" He ran into his room and started pulling stuff out of the boxes. She came in and he looked up at her with his big brown eyes and said, "But where do I put it, Sissy?"

Pearl melted even more. She went up and hugged him. "Oh, my sweet lil brother, here—"she took one of his shirts and showed him how to fold it.

“Since we’ve already folded it for the dresser, we’ll just put it in like this.” She pulled out a drawer and saw some old crayon marks inside. “Oh look, Bub, this is when you did some art on your furniture. Remember?”

He walked over and squealed. “Hey! That’s my cartoon dog and the other dog we used to have. That’s Rover! Ha!” Then he stopped and looked sad. “Sissy, is Rover in Heaven?”

“I don’t know, Bub,” she said. “But we know Daddy is,” she said, “and if dogs go to Heaven, then I’m sure they’re together. If Daddy is riding his motorcycle, then Rover is probably chasing him!” She tried to sound light-hearted, but she was starting to feel sad.

Robert burst into tears. “I miss Daddy!” he started sobbing, and ran to his bed and ducked under the quilt. “Why did he have to die?”

*Jesus, what do I say? Please help me!* Pearl felt tears well up in her eyes.

*A P.O.W.E.R. Princess is very strong....* She sat beside Robert on his bed and didn’t speak. She patted his back through the covers. “Bubba, Daddy wouldn’t want us to be sad. He’s with Jesus and has the best life of all now!”

“I want Daddy with me!” he said, and started sobbing again.

“Me too,” she whispered. Tears ran down her cheeks and shirt. She didn’t care. *Okay, Jesus, my heart still hurts, but I give it to You. Please take it!*

A line from a song that she loved rose up, and she sang it softly, over and over. **“You’re faithful, faithful; Father, You are faithful—we have put our trust in You...”** and she just sat there and patted his back and cried, not knowing what else to do. As she sang, she felt the loving presence of their Daddy God.

Robert started to cry silently, and she heard him sigh.

She hugged him. “Dear little brother, Daddy God loves you so much! And so do I!”

He buried his face deeper in the pillow and pulled the covers up over his head, but she felt peace. “We miss you, Daddy,” she said, and wiped a tear from her eye. “And we love You most, Daddy God! Thank You for helping my little brother.”

## Chapter Five — God’s *Objet d’art*

Their mother walked through the door.

“Sorry, Queen Mother, I—“

“Shhh ... It’s all right, Precious,” her mother said gently. “That was so sweet of you to sing to him. You have a lovely voice.”

Leaning over Robert, she gently pulled the covers off his head. “Sweetie, sit up for me.”

He pulled the pillow over his head as if to hide, and started crying aloud again. She put her hand on his back. “Dear LORD, please comfort my babies.”

He started to sob more loudly, and after a couple minutes of him continuing to cry with her rubbing his back, she said, “Son, move over. I’m going to lie down with you.”

He moved, but kept crying.

She lay on the bed and put her arm under his head and pulled him close to her. He hugged her tightly and

became quiet, although the tears ran down his face like a stream.

“Pearl, you lay on the other side of me, okay?” said their mother. “We’ll all just rest. Kind of like I did with you kiddos a few years ago when you were much smaller. Remember?”

Pearl obeyed. *This is weird*, she thought, *but I remember. And I’m glad we’re all together. Jesus, please help our hearts stop hurting. And tell Daddy we miss him*, she prayed.

“I love you both so much!” said their mother, and hugged them closer. Pearl glanced at her mom and saw silent tears. Her own eyes filled, and they spilled onto her mother’s blouse, but Pearl didn’t make a sound.

They all cried together for a few minutes, then dozed.

Pearl woke to smell barbecue, feeling happier now.

“Yum, Uncle Burt must be cooking again, and I’m hungry,” she said.

The clock flashed 11:30. They slept almost an hour!

Her mother stirred, and turned toward her and smiled. “I love you, Pearl,” she said, putting her face close.

Robert had turned toward the wall, and didn’t move. Pearl admired again the deep green of her mother’s eyes. She liked it when people told her that her eyes looked like her mom’s, even though they were more blue, like her dad’s. But she liked green. It was such a soothing color. And her mother’s eyes were very soothing right now.

“I’m so sorry life has turned out like this Dear Heart,” her mother said. A tear escaped onto the pillow. “But God is faithful and good, and things are going to be okay.”

Pearl patted her mother on the shoulder. “Yes, Queen Mother, I know. And Daddy would be proud of you. You are truly a virti—vurtus—uh—you know, like that woman in Proverbs.”

One side of her mother’s mouth rose in a semi-smile, and Pearl was glad. It was time for her mother to be happy again.

“My sweet daughter, you do have a way with words,” she said, and stroked Pearl’s cheek. “I love you, Precious. And you are a virtuous young woman yourself.”

“Virtuous,” Pearl repeated. “Yes, that’s it.”

Robert turned over but seemed to still be asleep. To Pearl, he looked so innocent and vulnerable when he was resting, even younger than he was.

Pearl smiled, then eased out of bed, and her mother followed and gently closed the door to his room. “Let’s let him rest,” she said, pulling the cover closer up his neck. “I believe this move has been harder on him than on anyone else.”

“I’ll help him put his stuff up later,” said Pearl. “But now I’m hungry.”

“Thank you, Dear. Me too. Smells like Uncle Burt has a good lunch for us.”

“Yes, let’s eat, ‘cause Robin and Lucas will be over later so we can ride horses.”

“Oh, that’s right. If he’s not up in a few minutes, I’ll get him ready,” said her mother. “Also, I expect you and Robin to model the correct behavior with this riding thing,” she told Pearl.

“Listen to Uncle Burt and try not to make the horses gallop across the field or something, all right? The boys may not admit it, but they look up to you big sisters. So help them by showing good sense. If they trot, they may fall and get hurt, and we’re not having that.”

She looked a bit worried, but continued. “When you learn enough of the basics, you can focus more on the riding part. Today, you need to learn to put the tack on and such, and that will help the boys too.”

“Tack? Like, thumbtack?” said Pearl, a bit confused.

“Oh Queen Mother, what is that? And how do I gallop, ’cause it looks like fun. Do I dig in my heels and go ‘giddy up, horsie’ like in the movies?” She giggled and pretended to be riding.

“You’ll find out,” her mother said, and playfully tousled Pearl’s hair. “I’ll meet you downstairs, Princess. Wash your hands and help Burt with whatever he needs.”

“Yes ma’am,” said Pearl and went to the kitchen. *LORD*, she thought, *I’m so thankful for Uncle Burt and good things to eat and think about!*

He was piling thick strips of barbecued brisket onto a big plate.

“Wow, Uncle Burt, you are such a good cook!” Pearl was hungry. “Can we eat now?”

He laughed. “I smoked this on the grill, but I bought the rest. I want you guys to eat well and not worry about food. You have enough going on.”

“Can we have some leftover cake for dessert? Or how about for a horsie-do?”

Burt looked puzzled. “Horsie-do? Are you making a bad joke, Sweetie?”

“No, you know! The snacks you eat before you eat!”

He chuckled. “Oh! You mean *hors de ouvres!*”

He made a funny face. “It’s French,” he said. “They spell a lot differently than us! Here, bring me a piece of paper and I’ll show you.”

Pearl grabbed a notepad and pen and he wrote it out.

“That’s weird!” she said. “I don’t think I could ever learn French!”

“Pearl, don’t say that!” said her mother, walking through the door. “You can do all things through Christ, remember? And actually, you are! Look at the word Burt wrote and pronounce it for me.”

“*Or-derves,*” Pearl said.

“There! You just spoke French!” said her mother. “See, you can do it! And now, I’m going to teach you an even better French word that describes you and Robert, and everything that God made.”

She wrote “*objet d’art*” on the notepad, then handed it to Pearl. “This word is pronounced ‘ob zha dar’ and I want you to say it for me.”

“Ob zha dar,” said Pearl, looking at the word. “That’s weird too!”

“Not weird, Dear, just different. But remember I said it describes you? What do you think it means?”

Pearl studied it. “It has art in it.....maybe a painting or something?”

“You’re right about the ‘art’ part. *Objet d’art* means ‘work of art’. You are God’s work of art!

“Good job, Charlotte,” said Burt, “and so are you. Now, would you get Rob? Risa and the kids will be here in a bit.”

“No, I’m going to let him sleep—and heal. You can teach him later.”

“Sure,” Burt said. “Now you guys grab a plate. Oh, Pearl wanted a ‘horsie-do’ of your cake, and that’s how we got into French.”

“I know two French words now,” Pearl said. “And that calls for dessert!”



## Chapter Six — Homeschool and Horses

“Mmm. Your cake is even better today,” Pearl said. She pulled the cake plate closer. “Looks like we’ll have some left for Robert, too.”

Pearl helped her uncle clear the table, and they heard a knock on the door. “I need to go get my shoes on! And I’d like to ride your best horse, Uncle Burt!”

“You’ll like them all,” he said.

Pearl ran to the door. There was Risa and the kids.

They hugged, and Lucas stayed with Burt while Robin followed Pearl to her room.

“Hey, I like your zebra theme,” said Robin. “Cool.”

“Thanks,” said Pearl, pulling on her running shoes. “Zebras are so neat. I’m glad **Elohim** made those striped horsies!

“Elohim?”

“Yes, that’s the Hebrew name for God that means ‘Creator,’ among other things. He is so brilliant, so awesome! All these plants and animals and people and more, huh!”

“Right,” said Robin. “I’ll have to tell Mom.”

“Do you know anything about horses?” she said, as they walked down together.

“A little,” said Robin. “I had a miniature paint pony years ago. Dad held me on top and let me pretend to ride, but I didn’t use a saddle or anything.”

“So where’s your dad now?” asked Pearl. “Is he coming?”

Robin didn’t answer for a few moments. “He...has many businesses and they take all his time—in another country. He decided that he was too busy for us.”

“Oh,” Pearl said. “I’m sorry. Do you hear from him?”

“He sends a card with money at Christmas and for our birthdays. That’s about it.”

Pearl turned and gave her a quick hug. “My daddy got killed in a motorcycle accident Memorial Day weekend. He’s in Heaven with Jesus now. I miss him. So it’s kinda like yours is dead too, huh?”

“I guess,” Robin said, and looked away. She pointed toward the barn. “Let’s go outside.”

“Great idea. This is a happy day!” said Pearl, and gave Robin a big smile. “I’m glad you’re my friend.”

“Me too,” said Robin.

“And hey! Do you want to be a *P.O.W.E.R. Princess with me?*”

“What’s that?”

“A secret club I just started!”

“Sure.”

Pearl’s mother came in with a sleepy Robert by her side. “Robert, time to eat.”

He shook his head. “No, ride horses!”

Pearl’s mother sighed. “Fine. If you get hungry, you can have a banana.”

“I hate bananas!” said Robert.

“All right, horses it is,” said Burt. “Rob, grab a couple of apples from the bowl on the bar.”

Robert got the apples and they all went out the back door and crossed a small pasture to the horse barn. Watchman went with them, lumbering along and sniffing often at things.

“Watch your step,” said Burt, avoiding a brown pile. “There are horse patties and gopher holes and such. The girls will be over in a minute. They are curious, especially about new things.”

“This is so pretty,” said Pearl, and pointed. “Look at the little creek back there, she said. I bet there are some crawdads and sunfish we could catch!”

“And probably snakes and tadpoles and slimy snails, too,” said Lucas.

“Yuck,” said Pearl. “But we’ll have to have a trail ride down there and follow it.” She turned to her uncle.

“How big is your land, Uncle Burt?”

“I have two hundred acres, and I want to buy the adjoining property from Mr. Sikes. We shall see what happens. Most of my land is wooded, but I’ve been thinking about cutting the timber and planting an orchard and doing more organic farming.”

“Oh that would be good,” said Pearl’s mother. “I’ve been wanting to teach the kids about **organic gardens**, and it would be good for them to learn

about farming. They've had a **butterfly garden** and have grown a few peppers in pots without pesticide, but that's about it."

"Oh a butterfly garden," said Robin. "Cool."

"I want a butterfly!" said Robert. "When are the horsies coming? Can I have an apple?"

"They'll be here in a bit. Save the apples, Bub." He picked up Robert and held him.

"Hey!" said Pearl. "You and I could have a butterfly garden by the fountain. That would be cool."

"Sure. All of that sounds like good projects for homeschool," Burt replied. "The kids could help with each part, including deciding how much money the timber would earn, how much the equipment and seed and fertilizer and watering would cost, and such."

"Yeah!" Pearl said. "I could buy my laptop and phone!"

Burt kept talking. "They could also learn to project how many pounds of produce they could get, and what they could sell it for at the farmers market."

"What does 'project' mean?" asked Pearl.

“Good question, Sweetie. It means to figure out what you think will happen—like doing research on how many tomatoes a farmer normally gets when he plants, say, five plants and takes care of them, then multiplying that number by the number of plants he really has.”

“Hmm,” said Pearl. “It sounds a lot like math.”

“You got it, Princess. But you can do it.”

“But I am much better at English,” said Pearl. *I don't really like math, she thought. I'd rather just write.*

“Pearl, math is just as important as reading and writing,” said her mother, patting her shoulder. “Don't worry; we'll help you. And we can use it for math class in homeschool. It'll be fun.”

*For who? Pearl thought. LORD, I don't like math! You're gonna have to help me with this, Jesus. You're even gonna have to help me like it, please!*

She heard a whisper within. *I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.*

“Okay, God, but—“

“What, Pearl?” said Burt.

“Nothing. Just thinking.” *Okay, Daddy God, a P.O.W.E.R. Princess can do all things—with You helping! Help me to not be afraid from now on!*

“That’s a very good thing to do, Pearl,” said her uncle. “If more people would take time to think and plan ahead, they would have better lives!”

He continued. “Another thing I thought about was raising lambs for you kids to show, and some exotic chickens or something, and a big veggie garden.”

“That will be fun!” said Pearl.

“That includes pulling weeds,” her uncle said. “But you can make it fun. You can also learn to pick peaches and apples and pecans, and if you’re good enough, you will have lots of work. You might even get to teach other kids, and make a little money.”

“Maybe we could help too,” said Lucas.

“Cool. So can we ride now, please?” Pearl asked.

“In a little while, kiddo,” Burt said. “Just wait.” He nodded. “Yes, you guys could have your own business, and a savings account. Might as well start early! And your mama’s taught you to **tithe** and **give offerings**, right, Pearl?”

“Yes Sir,” Pearl said.

“Good,” said her uncle. “Don’t ever stop. I wish I’d learned to tithe when I was your age, but thank the LORD I learned it about 20 years ago!”

“That’s where God gives us ten dollars and just asks for one of them back, right?”

“Right, Pearl! Very good. He gives us every good thing that we have, and He could ask for five back. Or seven. Or three. But He only asks for one! And with that little one, He does amazing things—He sends the Good News around the world.

“I agree,” said Risa. “We started tithing last year, and it’s been amazing what God has done. I can’t explain how some of our bills got paid, except by God’s goodness.”

“And it just gets better, Risa,” Burt told her. He held her gaze for a bit and smiled very wide.

“The kids already have a savings account,” Pearl’s mother said. “But I like your idea about business. We could actually incorporate science and math and reading into this, and maybe even social studies and community service, since the right kind of farming affects our economy and the health of our planet—”

“Yes,” Burt said. “They will learn lots of things that will help them in life.”

“It will make **homeschool** even more interesting,” said her mother, with a smile.

“What’s homeschool like?” asked Robin.

“Well, we don’t sit on the couch in our PJs and watch T.V. all day,” said Pearl’s mother.

“No way,” said Pearl. “We do lots of things, like take field trips and do lots of subjects at once. That’s fun. But we still have to earn grades and take tests, even a big state test,” Pearl said. “I guess that’s in every school!”

“Yes, ma’am, there are reasons for that,” said her mother.

“Right!” said Risa. “I have my kids review often, starting with the Word.”

Pearl’s mother said, “Do you teach at the school too?”

“Yes, sixth grade at Grace Academy.”

“Now that’s a ministry!” Burt said.

“You’re right,” said Risa, laughing and rolling her eyes a bit. “But I love ‘em—most moments!—and we have fascinating conversations, especially about God. And Pearl, even in a public school, kids have a right to ask questions and talk about their faith,” she said.

“Always be thankful that you live in a free country!” Pearl’s mother said.

“But I thought there were some schools where kids and teachers can’t pray or use Jesus’ name!” Pearl said.

Her mother sighed. “There have been a few messes like that, but God is moving, and He’s giving us a new America, where we can all be free to worship the LORD. That’s why this country was founded!”

“Amen!” said Risa.

“Preach, sister!” said Burt.

“It may look bad right now for Christians, but there is no one and nothing more powerful than Christ the LORD!” she continued. “God is faithful, and will not be outdone! JESUS is LORD of America!”

## Chapter Seven — New Paths and How to Sit a Horse

Pearl's mother and Risa had their backs to the fence as they talked. Burt grinned and motioned to the kids to be quiet.

“Uncle Burt, look!” Rob said. “Shhh! It's a surprise for your mom,” Burt whispered.

The kids giggled, and Risa said, “What?”

A mare had walked up behind the mothers. She whinnied loudly, and the women jumped.

Everyone laughed.

“That's what!” said Pearl. “She was sniffing your hair at first!”

“*Hola!*” said Risa, turning around. “Hello!” She patted the horse's neck.

Pearl's mother gently scratched the mare's nose, and said, “Hey, horse! Hope you liked my shampoo!”

The horse whickered in appreciation as Watchman stuck his nose under the fence to sniff her hooves.

“That’s Splash,” said Burt. “She’s a sweetie, and lots of fun, as you just discovered. Horses are curious, and have different personalities, just like people.”

“Why is her name Splash?” asked Robert. “For the big brown splotch?”

“Yes, that’s part of it. She’s all white, except for that brown patch. Kind of a paint horse wanna-be.”

“Hey, I like that one too!” said Pearl, spotting another horse walking up. “She’s a Palomino!”

“That’s my favorite,” said Robin.

The horse was cream colored, with a long blonde mane and four white stockings. She held her tail high and with elegance. Pearl held out her hand, and the mare stuck out her nose. “She’s got pretty brown eyes. Most horses have brown eyes, don’t they?”

“Yes they do,” said Burt. “Aurora is special. She’s a quarter horse with a lot of Palomino in her, and she was a gift from an elderly lady I helped, who is now in Heaven.”

“Aurora!” said Robin. “What does it mean?”

Aurora stretched her neck to allow Pearl and Robin to scratch her nose, and she blew at them gently.

“It’s Latin for ‘dawn,’” he said. “She’s a little more finicky than Splash, but still easy to ride for kids. So when she blows through her nose like that, that means she likes you. Now you can gently blow into her nose to tell her you like her too.

Pearl walked to Aurora, and put her head close to the horse’s nose. *This feels silly*, Pearl thought, *but here I go*. She blew into the horse’s nostrils, and to Pearl’s delight, Aurora rubbed her nose on Pearl’s cheek.

Pearl hugged Aurora’s head. “We are going to be good friends!” she whispered. “Now you do it, Robin!”

“Okay,” Robin said, and walked over and did what she saw Pearl do. Aurora blew gently back at Robin too.

“Now she likes both of us!” said Pearl. “I guess us four will have to share horses, but that’s okay!”

“Do you only have two horsies?” said Robert, hugging Watchman’s neck. “I wanna ride Splash!”

“Hold on, Buddy,” Burt said. “We’ve got to get some tack out of the barn first. But why don’t you give the horses those red apples?”

“Oh yeah! Here, horsies!” He held out one in each hand and the horses stepped forward and munched and crunched the apples. “Oh wow, look at those big teeth!” Robert said.

“That’s a great snack for them,” Burt said. “They get even more excited about watermelon.”

Burt and Watchman and the kids walked to the barn, where Burt pulled bridles down and handed one each to the girls, then turned to Lucas and Robert.

“Boys, get the blankets from the trunk. They go on first, then the saddles. I’ll let you guys take turns learning how to sit and steer a horse. Then we’ll walk you to the creek and back.”

“New fun!” said Pearl.

“Yes,” said her uncle. “New paths for you all,” he said, “and it just gets better!”

They took the tack through the gate. Splash and Aurora came up and Burt rubbed their heads.

“Horses don’t like bridles and bits,” Burt explained, as he slipped the harness over Splash’s ears and nose. She mouthed the metal bit and shook her head. He stroked her neck.

“But if we ride right, we won’t hurt them,” he said. “They like kids and will be easy for you to ride, so don’t jerk or pull hard on the reins—understand?”

“Yes Sir,” Pearl said, and the rest nodded.

Pearl felt very happy and grateful. *What a good life You are giving us, LORD. Thank You!*

She noticed the trees that towered above her uncle. They were various hues—some bright yellow, and some intense red-orange, almost as if on fire. There were purples and greens mixed in, too.

“Everything is so gorgeous,” she said. “Daddy God is such a good artist!”

“Pearl Sweetie, are you listening? You need to learn this,” said her mother, sounding irritable.

“Yes ma’am,” said Pearl. “I was just admiring God’s work.”

“You’re right,” said her mother. She looked around.

“Burt, can we just stop and thank God for a minute?” she said, and looked up. “Thanksgiving is next month, but it should be every day. Pearl was doing what I’ve told her to—marveling at the power and goodness of God, and I was correcting her. But I’m

the one that needs correcting! I guess I've just been a bit stressed.”

“Sure! Let's!” Burt said, and raised his hands toward Heaven and bowed his head. “Father, we thank and praise You! You are so good, and You have only great plans for us all! Thank You for Your marvelous creation, and eyes to see it!”

Watchman howled a bit as if he wanted to join in the thanksgiving, and everyone laughed.

“That's a good dog!” Burt said, bending down and patting him on the back.

Burt continued, and his voice grew even more joyful. “LORD, we thank You for all these trees, for You talk about trees often in the Bible—and I'm so glad we don't live where we only have scrub bushes!—and also in what You are doing in bringing all of us together.”

He looked around at everyone, then closed his eyes again. “Thank You, LORD, for new paths, new relationships, new fun things to learn, and new life in every way! We love You, Father God!”

“Amen!” said Pearl.

“Now, Lucas,” Burt said, “walk up slowly to Splash, blow into her nose to say Hello, than scratch her neck.

Then put the blanket on her. She's used to a blanket and saddle, but she's not used to you yet."

Lucas did as Burt asked. Splash accepted the blanket without moving and Lucas continued to pet her.

"Good job," said Risa.

"Now Robert, take the reins hanging down and hold them gently, but don't pull, and don't jump around. If Splash moves, stay where you are and hold the reins."

"Okay," said Robert. He sounded happy. Pearl gave him a thumbs-up. Splash stood as if she understood. She put her nose next to Robert and blew at him. "She likes me!" he said, and reached up to pat her neck.

"Robert, make sure she doesn't accidentally step on you," said his mother, sounding a little nervous.

"Good job, Buddy," Burt said. "Charlotte, relax. Now Lucas, come with me."

They returned shortly and put the small brown saddle on Splash. Burt fastened the straps around her belly and made sure the stirrups were even.

"All right," said Burt, "now, Lucas, you hold the reins, and we're going to let Robert go first! Rob, I don't think your feet will reach, but we'll get you up here."

“Yay!” said Robert, all smiles. Burt lifted him up, and sat him on Splash. “Wow!” said Robert, holding tight to the saddle horn. “I’m way up!”

“Yes you are!” said his mother.

Robert pushed his heels into Splash. “Giddy up!”

“No, Robert!” said Pearl. “Stop kicking the horse!”

“Pearl, I’ll handle this,” said their mother. “Rob honey, it’s not time for Splash to go yet. Wait for Aurora to get her saddle on, so Lucas can go with you, okay?”

“Okay. What do I do?”

“Just sit there and pat the horse. She likes that.”

“Okay!” he leaned down and hugged Splash. “You’re pretty,” he said, rubbing her mane. “I like your name. You’re a good horse!”

“That’s the way to do it, Rob,” said Burt.

“Now, Pearl, you put the bridle on Aurora,” Burt said, and handed it to her.

“But what if I do it wrong? I haven’t done this before and I don’t want to hurt her,” Pearl protested.

“You’ll do fine,” said her uncle. “Just relax, Darlin’. It only goes on one way. Talk quietly, and slowly put the bridle up to her head, let her smell it, then slip it over her ears and up over her nose, and the bit will work itself into her mouth.”

“You can do it Sissy!” said Robert.

Surprised by his encouragement, Pearl laughed. “Sure you can,” said Robin. “And you can teach me.”

“You’re a smart girl, Princess,” said her mother. *I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me*, Pearl heard inside. “Aurora, here we go,” she said.

At her name, Aurora stopped cropping grass and raised her head. Pearl held up the bridle as her uncle had said, and let Aurora smell it. She sniffed it and stood obediently. The bridle slipped on easily, and Pearl was delighted. *Thank You, LORD.*

“Good job!” said her uncle. “Now, you and Robin go and get the blanket for Aurora. I’ll help you with the saddle, and we’ll take Robert and Lucas to the creek first, then you girls can go.”

“Sure,” said Pearl. She and Robin hurried to the barn, with Watchman following them, and got the purple blanket from the trunk. It had Southwestern patterns of gold and red on it.

“This is so much fun!” said Pearl. “And once we learn to ride, we can go on trail rides and stuff!”

“Yes, and have picnics and explore his land, if he doesn’t mind!”

“Probably not,” Pearl said. “He’s a pretty cool uncle.”

Burt came in and picked up the pretty black saddle. “You girls could handle this, but it’s kind of heavy and I’ll do it this time,” he said. “Robin, please put the blanket on Aurora.”

“Yes Sir,” she said. She walked up slowly to the horse, let her smell the blanket, and put it on her back. Then Burt put on the saddle and strapped it down.

“Lucas, Aurora is tall, but I think you can get up by yourself, right? First, stroke her nose.”

Lucas did and was soon seated on Aurora. She was calm and steady, and put her head down again while Risa held the reins.

“Charlotte, would you and Risa like to lead the boys? I’ll go ahead of you to lead you in the right way.”

“Like our Good Shepherd leads the sheep,” said Pearl.

Charlotte took the reins for Splash and Risa gently raised Aurora's head up.

"Girls," said Burt, "you can follow. Just stay far enough behind the horses so they can't kick you if they got startled or something, although that is extremely rare. Occasionally a bunny will dart across in front of them, but these horses do not spook easily."

"Yippee!" said Robert. "Here we go!"

Watchman ran ahead of them, and Burt led them down the gentle slope to the stream. The grass was freshly mowed and the path was clear.

The girls stayed clear of the horses' hind legs.

"What a great day!" said Pearl. "I'm so glad the sun is out, and the weather is just right! God knew we'd be doing this today, and He fixed it just for us!"

"Yeah," said Robin. "And maybe once the guys get through, you and I can have more time."

"Ooh, I'm so excited! I think Aurora is so beautiful, and I've never ridden a Palomino before!

"Me neither, and I believe she's very smart, too."

“Yeah,” said Pearl, starting to walk. “I think most horses are smart, aren’t they? My dad used to show me in the encyclopedia how the horse was ahead of the dog—smarter.”

“Encyclopedia?” Robin asked, walking beside her. “Is that a book?”

“Yeah, a big book with lots of information.” Pearl said. “Grandma and Grandpa had a whole set—A to Z—and gave them to us. My favorite is the L book, where it talks about the royal Lipizzaner horses. I got to see them when I was very little, but I don’t remember much. I wonder if they ever come around here?”

“We can find out,” said Robin. “But we’ll probably have to look on the internet to see their schedule.”

“That would be a good reason to use it!” said Pearl, stopping to smile at Robin. “Wouldn’t it be the coolest to ride one? And they must be the closest horse to what Jesus will ride when He returns!”

*Yeah! With You all things are possible!* Pearl thought.

“Anyway,” said Robin, stopping too, “couldn’t you find all that on the web? I don’t have my cell phone with me, or we could look it up on there.”

“We don’t get on the internet very often. Queen Mother uses it for work, but she says we need to learn how to use encyclopedias and dictionaries and things that we can hold, in case the computer doesn’t work or something. She doesn’t really care for the Bible on computers, either.”

Robin laughed and nodded. “Yeah, I guess a book always works! But I do have a Bible app that I read when I’m in the car or waiting somewhere, although I have a book Bible at school.”

“So you guys have Bible class at school?” Pearl asked.

“Yes, it’s a Christian school,” Robin said. She shook her head. “We used to go to the public school, but we got tired of kids and even some of the teachers cursing and talking about all kinds of junk.”

Pearl was shocked. “Even the teachers?”

“Well, not all of them, of course,” Robin said, shaking her head. “I had some really sweet ones for a couple classes, but the others seemed to have an attitude toward me because they knew I was a Christian. So I am *sooooo* glad that we get to go to Grace Academy, where we can be free to talk about Jesus!”

She smiled. “Like Mom told me before we started and before she started teaching there a couple years ago,

not even a Christian school is perfect, because people always have problems of some kind. But all the teachers are Christians, and the students are supposed to be. We pray for each other, and cursing and junk and wearing skimpy clothes is not allowed.”

“I guess I’m glad we do homeschool, although to me it would be more fun to go to school with you now,” Pearl said.

“Hey!” said Robin, “That would be great! Why don’t we pray about it, and next year, you would be in Mom’s class! Wouldn’t that be totally cool?”

“Yeah!” said Pearl. “Let’s pray now!”

So they did, and after they said Amen, Pearl said, “Thank You Daddy God, I believe it! That’s what our former pastor started teaching us about, Robin—that once we ask Daddy God for something and believe that He will do it cause He’s so good, that we just say, ‘Thank You’ for it from then on and keep believing.”

“Yes, thank You, LORD!” Robin said.

The girls heard Pearl’s mother calling them from the creek.

“Coming!” said Pearl, and waved. She lowered her voice and said, “Hey, they didn’t hear us pray about me going to school next year. But God did!”

Robin nodded and giggled and the girls gave each other a high five and started walking toward the water.

*Daddy God, help me to put Grace Academy on my Vision List!* thought Pearl. *I know You can do this!*



## Chapter Eight — Dreaming to Help Others

When Pearl and Robin got to the creek, a baby rabbit zipped in front of them.

“Eeeek!” said Pearl’s mother. She froze.

The horses stopped, their eyes wide but not frightened. They were alert but at ease, so that the boys were in no danger of being hurtled over their heads.

Watchman barked and dashed after it. He lunged at the bush where the baby had darted for cover.

“Watchman!” said Burt. “Enough! Come!”

The dog whined but came to Burt obediently. Burt scratched his head.

“It’s just a baby rabbit,” said Risa, and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Oh, I’d like to have one,” said Pearl. “They are cute.”

“Maybe I can catch you one some time,” said Lucas.

“Good, Aurora. Good, Splash!” said Burt soothingly to the horses, as he turned around to pat them both. “See, ladies? Your kiddos are in good hands. My girls are well trained--even with snakes, which they loathe.”

“That makes all of us!” said Pearl. “You don’t see snakes here much, do you?”

“No, I keep the grass short so they can’t hide. But I have seen a water moccasin. Those things are nasty. Anyway, just beware.”

“I’m glad the creek is clear,” said Pearl’s mother.

“Yes, this lovely Arkansas mountain water is clear and cold,” he said. “It gets bearable to swim in July for us humans, although Watchman likes to swim in it year round. In April, you’ll be able to see the bullfrog tadpoles. They are huge! Sometimes you may see a snake, but they are usually more scared of us than we are of them.”

Pearl shivered. *Usually? Yuck! Queen Mother says we girls hating snakes goes back to the Garden, when the devil disguised himself as one and tricked Eve. Daddy God, I hope I never see another one! If I do, help me kill it!*

Pearl remembered her daddy blasting a few snakes away with his gun. Even dead, the things were revolting.

“I’ve found a few poisonous snakes and other creatures in many of the houses I’ve had to search. Usually, there were other strange things around too,” said Burt.

“Was your uncle a cop?” Robin whispered.

“Yes,” said Pearl quietly. “He was a state trooper. And the best, I’m sure! I’m glad he never got shot or anything! I remember we’ve prayed for him a lot.”

“Your prayers helped keep him safe!” Robin said.

“Hey! Can we swim, Mama?” asked Robert.

“Not now, Rob, it’s too cold. It’s the girls’ turn to ride,” Burt said. “You guys come with me to the barn and I’ll teach you more things you need to know.”

“Awww, can’t we go again?” said Lucas.

“Maybe another time,” said Risa.

At the barn, the boys got off and the girls mounted. Pearl was almost tall enough to get on Aurora by herself, but she had to have a little help. “I’ll grow!”

she told Burt. “Wow, things look better from up here!”

“That’s right!” he said, and laughed. “You’re getting an eagle’s eye view, almost.”

“Can Robin and I please ride by ourselves?”

“No, Pearl,” said her mother. “We led the boys, and we’re going to lead you. You probably don’t know as much as you think about riding, Sweetie.”

“But I’ve been reading books, and Robin used to have a Shetland pony, and—“

“A mini paint pony,” said Robin. “There’s a difference.”

“Not this time,” said her mother firmly.

Pearl bit her lip.

“No worries,” Robin whispered, and gave her a lopsided smile.

“Be thankful you get to ride,” Pearl’s mother said.

*Robin’s almost 14 and I’m almost 12. What’s the deal?* Pearl thought, feeling grumbly inside. .

“Remember, you *decide* to have a good attitude.” said her mother. “It is a choice. Obedience is good. But

obedience with the right attitude is excellent. So be *excellent*,” said her mother.

The guys and Watchman went to the barn. Pearl didn't say anything while the women led the girls on the horses down to the creek. She pretended she was riding Aurora by herself, going on a very important mission to bring back lost treasure or something.

*Hmmm. How about a trail ride through the mountains to the **Buffalo River**, to find and recover stolen stuff and return it to its owners? Yeah! Robin and I can work with the sheriff. After all, horses can go places cars can't, and they are faster than people walking.*

She looked up at the clouds. *Or maybe a trail ride to raise money for a kid who needed help with hospital bills, like the little kid with cancer that we took toys and treats to a couple years ago at the **Arkansas Children's Hospital**.....*

“Thank You, Daddy God, for good health!” said Pearl out loud.

“That's a great attitude!” said her mother, looking back at her. “Does riding help you think about that?” They got to the creek, and saw the light sparkling on the water as the breeze blew softly over it. No one spoke for a few minutes, but rested in the peace.

“The light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun,” her mother said softly. “I think that’s in **Ecclesiastes.**”

“I was just thinking we could have a trail ride to raise money to help sick kids,” said Pearl.

“*Excellente!*” said Risa, turning Splash. “What a great idea! There are lots of people around here who have horses, and we could get the local ranches involved too, and the churches—“

“Yeah! And we could get businesses to donate food to sponsor the riders and to feed all of those after the trail ride—“Robin said.

“Wow, this is getting big!” said Pearl. “I bet we’ll make lots of new friends, too! And help lots of kids!”

“Looks like we have an event, and how quickly!” said Pearl’s mother. “Great minds think alike.”

“We know a little boy who could definitely use some help,” said Risa. “Pearl,” she said, as she looked over at her, “you truly are a jewel, with a beautiful heart!”

“Oh thank you, Ms. Risa!” said Pearl. “I’m so glad you guys are our friends! And I want Robin to come back soon, okay?”

“We certainly will,” said Risa. “We hope you will come to church tomorrow, too. Remember, we’re making plans for the **Hallelujah Harvest and Hayride** at the end of this month.”

“Queen Mother, we’re going, right?”

“Yes, Pearl, as long as we can have a nap tomorrow afternoon,” her mother said, and laughed. She turned Aurora back toward the barn. “We just arrived yesterday and already we’re very busy!”

She sighed and smiled. “Living with Burt is like living in a hotel, so that makes it much easier, sort of,” she said. “But I need to go through the all the stuff in storage, and I suppose we should do it this week while everything is out of order anyway.”

“Maybe we can have a yard sale and meet new people too!” Pearl said.

“Possibly ...”

“Can we have it Friday?”

“Pearl, let’s just be quiet and enjoy the evening, okay?” said her mother, sounding tired.

“Yes ma’am,” Pearl said meekly. *Wow, God, so many exciting things—thank You! And just give Queen Mother strength. I know You are her Husband now!*



## Chapter Nine — The New Church

“What time is it?” Pearl asked as they pulled into the church parking lot.

“It’s 9:24,” she replied, sounding irritated. “Remind me to plan ahead better when we’re trying to get all three of us out of the house and dressed nicely!”

“Yes ma’am,” said Pearl quietly and decided not to ask anything else for a while.

They hurried out of the car and into the church.

The sanctuary was beautiful. Streams of soft color flowed through the tall stained glass windows and Pearl felt a peace envelop her that was deeper than she remembered. Burt introduced them and bragged on them to many people, all of whom smiled and held out their hands or hugged them.

*Wow, it seems like we all know each other,* thought Pearl. *This is great, Daddy God!*

Her mother looked a little more at ease, from smiling at all the nice people.

“This is a good place to be, isn’t it?” she asked her mom, following her to a seat near the back.

“Yes, we will see if this is where the LORD wants us, Pearl. One step at a time.”

*LORD, just help her to relax, please.*

“Where’s Uncle Burt going?” asked Robert. “I want to sit with him!”

“Shhh. Robert, Burt told me he sits at the front because he’s an usher. You can see him after the service.”

Just then, Risa and Robin and Lucas walked up. “Great to see you!” said Risa. “Pearl, you will be in my class in a little while. I think you’ll like it.”

“What about me?” Robert said.

“You may stay with me, Sweetie,” said his mother.

“But I want to sit with Lucas,” he said, waving at his friend. Lucas, sitting near the front, waved back.

“I don’t care, if you don’t,” said Risa to Pearl’s mother.

Robert tried to run, but his mother held him and he couldn’t break loose.

“Be still!” she said in a very loud whisper. “You are sitting with me today.” She touched his chin and raised his face to her. “You are to still sit and be quiet and listen. This is our first time here and you will not be a distraction, do you understand?”

“Yes ma’am,” Robert mumbled. He crossed his arms and stuck out his lip.

“We’re glad you’re here, Robert,” Risa said gently, and patted him on the head. “If you are good today, I bet you can sit with Lucas next time.”

“Can I, Mom?” he asked.

“We shall see,” said his mother. “It depends on you, Rob. Now, let’s get ready to sing. See the screens on the wall? Read the words to the songs and sing along—just like at our old church, okay?”

The band finished their warm up and the choir members started filing in and the worship leader said, “Everyone please stand and let us praise the LORD. For He is good and His mercy endures forever!”

Pearl squeezed her mom’s hand, and put her arm around Robert. He squirmed away. “Don’t touch!”

“Robert, be quiet!” Pearl said, trying to speak kindly. She pulled on his arm. “Stand up to sing.”

“I don’t want to sing. I want to draw!”

Their mother reached over to Robert, pulling him up. “Robert,” she whispered loudly, “move next to me. You will be quiet and you will mind the leaders of this church, do you understand?”

“We are going to sing a couple of good old hymns, then some new favorites,” said the worship leader. “After that, we will have special music.”

Robert scowled. “Can I draw after we sing?”

Pearl grabbed the program and handed him the blank side. “I’ll get you a pen in my purse and you can draw what you learn about God, okay?”

The music started, and it was energetic. Although she didn’t feel like it, she smiled at her brother, and handed him the pen. “I love you,” she whispered, and kissed him on the head. *LORD, help him be good*, she prayed. *And help us all think about You!*

“Yuck!” he said, but took the pen and got busy.

The woman in the seat in front of them picked up her baby and held her. The little girl, with a big pink bow in her curls, looked at them and held out her hand.

“Baby!” said Robert and grinned and waved at her.

The music started and Pearl recognized “Victory in Jesus,” one of her mom’s favorites, and then “Love Lifted Me.”

*Daddy really liked that one, thought Pearl. She started to feel sad. Help me, LORD—I know Daddy is with you in Heaven. Maybe he is singing this right now, huh?”*

She started to sing, and Pearl felt strength stir inside her. *“Love lifted me, Love lifted me. When nothing else could help, Love lifted me...”*

After worshipping she felt more joyful. “God lives in His praise,” her mother had taught her.

The song ended, and Pearl’s mother reached over and patted her on the shoulder. “Thank you, Precious, for taking care of Rob so I could worship. I feels better. You are a very thoughtful young lady.”

She hugged her, and Pearl felt so good!

“Now, for our offering,” said the song leader. “We’re going to sing a song called ‘Blameless,’ which talks about how we are righteous in God by believing in what the blood of Jesus did for us; how He sees us as flawless. Truly, amazing grace!”

“I need more paper!” Robert said. Their mother reached over and pulled several pages out of her notebook.

“Draw that big cross for me, Robert,” she said, handing him the paper, and pointing to the huge silver cross suspended from the ceiling, above the choir loft.

Robert’s eyes grew big. “Okay!” he said. “Yeah!”

The song started, and Pearl felt tears come to her eyes. *Thank You, LORD, for loving me anyway, even when I’m really bad to Robert!*

As the last notes faded, a reverent hush came over the congregation. The pastor, who had come up onto the stage, did not speak for several seconds.

Then he said, “We praise You, Holy One, Who took our sin and gave us Your righteousness—because You love us! We love You, Father God, and we thank You for giving us Jesus. Through our faith in His blood, we are truly *blameless!*”

The crowd clapped and many people said, “Amen!”

The pastor dismissed the children. “Pearl, let Robert come with you since this is his first time.”

“*Mommmm!* Do I have to?”

“Yes! Thank you for being a trooper,” said her mother firmly.

Pearl just shut her mouth.

“Where are we goin’?” asked Robert.

Robin walked up, smiling.

“Sorry,” Pearl said, “but Rob’s gonna have to come with us, cause he’s kinda scared—“

“Am not!” He stuck out his arm. “I got the cross with me!” He had drawn a huge cross on his forearm, instead of on the paper.

“Robert!” said their mother. “You go to the bathroom and wash that off!”

Robin smiled. “Not a problem, Mrs. Williams,” She took Robert’s hand. “Come with me. And you’re gonna love class,” she told him.

“Yay!” he said, jumping up and down.

Pearl was relieved. *Thank You, LORD, You always know what we need!*



## Chapter Ten — Lessons in Love

Risa waved at Pearl and Robert as they entered the class. “Hey guys—great to have you! I think you’ll really enjoy our lesson, and then we’ll have snacks and make some things for the Hallelujah Harvest and Hayride this Saturday. You guys are coming, right?”

“Yes!” said Pearl. “I’m excited—Robert, put that down!”

He had discovered the big box of pretzels and was about to dig in.

Several other kids came in, staring at them.

“Mr. Robert, you can have some later, because our class is starting,” said Risa. “And you can be the first one to tell me how you trust your Daddy God, like Proverbs 3 says.. That’s what we’re talking about today.”

“Don’t know!” he said. Spotting the whiteboard, he dropped the pretzel box, ran and picked up a marker, and started drawing.

“Robert! Sit down or I’ll tell Mom!” Pearl said.

*Please help me, LORD!* she thought. *He is driving me nuts!* She opened her Bible to Psalm 34 like her mother had taught her to do, and read. *I will bless the LORD at all times....all times!*

“Actually, that is great if he wants to draw us some pictures of what it means to trust God,” Risa said kindly. “I bet you are quite an artist, aren’t you, Sweetie?”

“Yep!” Robert said, and took a marker in each hand, drawing as high as he could reach on the board.

Pearl shook her head. “Sorry, Ms. Risa!”

“No worries, Dear-heart. Lucas was that little once, and I think Robert is tame compared to him!”

*No one is worse than Robert!* Pearl thought.

Risa walked to the board. “Class, let’s welcome Pearl Williams and her little brother Robert. They have just moved here from Tennessee, and we’re glad!”

While the class clapped, Robert spun around, markers raised like batons, and said, “That’s me!”

The kids laughed.

“Rob, come sit,” said Pearl.

“Nope, Ms. Risa said I could draw!” Robert said.

Pearl sighed and Risa said, “It’s all right. Class, Sir Robert is drawing for us ways we can trust God, which is based on our Scripture for today. Can anyone say it from memory?”

“I can!” a dark-haired boy said. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

“Excellent!” said Risa. “You get to pick something from the treasure box.

Dillon walked over and chose a candy bar while Risa continued. “Kids, tell me what it means to trust God.”

“To know He means what He says,” said one.

“To just believe Him,” said another.

“Pearl, what about you?” said Risa.

“Well,” said Pearl, “it means doing what He says, and even when very bad things happen, you have to know that He loves you and didn’t send ‘em, and that somehow, He’s gonna make it all work out.”

“That is so very right,” said Risa. “Class, all your answers were correct. I just want to add that, every day, we stay as close as we can to Him, by coming to church and reading His Word and worshiping Him—here and at home. It also means praying—talking to Him every day. He knows all things.”

She continued. “Asking Him what He thinks is part of trusting Him—not leaving Him out of our decisions. We also ask Him to help us trust and follow Him.”

“Ms. Risa, I’ve got a drawing!” Robert said.

“Yes, Sir, what have you got?”

Robert pointed to his zig-zagged lines on the board and said, “Mary had to trust God so that when Jesus was born in the barn, the animals wouldn’t eat Him or step on Him, so He could grow up and die on the cross for us,” he said.

“Good job, Rob!” said Pearl, surprised. *My little bro makes sense!*

“Wow, Robert, what a great point for our lesson about how we trust God!” said Risa. “I never thought about that before. But surely you are right.”

Robert beamed as the class clapped for him.

She continued. “If you had been born in a barn, your mom probably would have kept you away from the animals, too!”

One of the boys made a mooing sound, then another bleated like a sheep. Robert laughed and mooed back.

“Enough, my little *people*,” teased Risa. “Aren’t you glad you have a human voice, and can talk to God? Remember, you are royal sons and daughters of the King, and He died for you—and rose again, and prays for you every day! So you can totally trust Him!”

“God loves animals too!” said Robert.

“Would you please sit by your sis, Mr. Rob? Thank you for sharing your drawing.”

Robert went to sit by Pearl, giving her a big hug.

*Wow, is this my brother?* she thought. *Maybe he just wanted some attention!*

“Our other verse is John 10:10,” Risa said. “Who knows it without looking? Thank you for bringing your Bibles. Everyone who brought theirs gets a piece of candy, to eat in class and not in big church, OK?”

Pearl spoke up. “The devil came to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came to give us a great life. Queen Mother taught us that in homeschool.”

“Yes, that’s a bit paraphrased, but you’ve got it,” said Risa. “Thanks, Pearl! We definitely want the Jesus life the Zoe Life, which means ‘life as God has it’ in Greek, which is the language of the New Testament.

“Who wants abundant life from Jesus—raise your hands!”

Every hand went up.

“Great. Close your eyes and let’s pray. Father God, You have taught us today from Your Word, and we thank You. Help us to truly trust You with every part of our lives, so You can give us abundant life. Help us remember to ask what You think and choose Your way, for it is always best! In Jesus’ name, amen.”

She walked over to the snack table. “I need a volunteer to pass out paper towels. Sir Robert, would you help?”

“Yes!” He dropped the markers, and zipped over.

“Robert!” Pearl said. “You go back and put Ms. Risa’s markers back on the board where you got them!”

He scowled, but obeyed, then dashed back over to the table and grabbed the paper towels. Another child picked up the sanitizer and started sharing it.

Risa let Pearl hand out pretzels.

Pearl held one up. “Ms. Risa, do you know how a pretzel is like God?”

“Cause it’s good for you?” said one boy.

“Tell us, Pearl,” said Risa.

“Because it’s three parts in one, see?” She pointed to the two holes on the side, then the hole in the top middle of the pretzel.

“Three parts, but they all make one—like the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You can also do that with an egg—the yolk, the white, and the shell are three parts, but they make one whole. Or you can use water—liquid, steam, and ice. Neat, huh?”

“Amen!” said Risa. “Thank you, Pearl, you are very smart and we’re glad you came.”

“Now, class,” Risa continued, “remember that this Saturday we celebrate the Hallelujah Harvest and Hayride. We’re having fire pit hamburgers and s’mores, and games and snacks and music and lots of fun.”

She smiled. “I think there will be a drama, too. Everyone please bring at least one person, and hopefully someone who hasn’t met Jesus yet. We

want them to understand that Jesus is the coolest and always ready to party!”

The kids talked among themselves while they ate.

“Who wants to help me get these invitations ready?” she continued. “Ask the LORD who to give them to, and He will show you. Don’t try to think too hard, just trust God to lead you. He will bring people into your path.”

She checked her phone. “We have about 30 minutes left. Pearl, would you like to help us?”

“Sure. What about Robert?”

“I want to draw more Jesus pictures!” he said.

“That’s fine,” said Risa. “Robert, please draw only on the board. Ashley and Pearl, please help me pass out the candy and baggies and flyers and tape. Kids, come around the table. You are a team and your mission is to get as many of these packets together as possible, so you can take some with you and invite people to the party this Saturday.”

She demonstrated how to put the packets together.

“Help each other, and remember that the Plan of Salvation is on one side of the flyer, and the party

info and directions and times to our church are on the other. The most important part is the Salvation tract.”

Her voice grew stronger. “Even if you give this to someone and they never come to church, they could still read this and receive Jesus, and we will see them in Heaven. Isn’t that great?”

One boy spoke up. “You mean that you don’t have to go to church to go to Heaven?”

“No, Michael. God doesn’t let people into Heaven based on whether they go to church or not, and thank goodness, because there were a many years I didn’t go, and then not often! But the LORD showed me I needed church. It’s school for our spirit and soul.”

She smiled and continued. “Every person needs to go to a church that truly teaches the whole Bible, and to be around other believers who really love God. This helps us be strong. Plus, we have fun and are much more powerful than by ourselves!”

Michael looked thoughtful, and got busy putting packets together. “My parents say they don’t need church,” he said quietly, “but I’m praying they will change their minds.”

“Yeah, my dad won’t come,” said one girl, “although Mom and I have come almost every Sunday for years. It hurts our hearts.”

Risa looked sad. “Yes, my dears, I know. It does hurt. But keep praying. God is the Master heart-changer!” “Heart-changer!” Robert said. “Neat!” He drew a big heart on the board. Then he said, “But my daddy doesn’t come to church with us anymore.” He dropped his head as if to cry.

Risa hesitated, and walked over to hug Robert, then said, “Sweetie, did you know your daddy is in Heaven every day now? He is celebrating Jesus and learning from Him *every* day now!”

Robert brightened and said, “Yeah!” He wrote the word, “Daddy” inside the heart, and drew a cross beside that.

Pearl smiled. *Thank You, LORD, that is wonderful that Daddy gets to be with You all the time!*

“Good job, Mr. Robert!” said Risa. “Now kids, get with the person closest to you and pray for each other right now. The LORD says that where two or three are gathered together, He is there.”

She grabbed Robert’s hand. “Sweetie, let’s you and me pray, okay?”

Robert nodded. “I get to pray with the teacher!” He beamed.

“LORD, please minister healing to Robert’s little heart,” Risa said. “Raise him up to be a mighty man of God like his father and uncle!”

“Robert!” Pearl whispered loudly, peeking. “You are supposed to close your eyes when you pray!”

“Don’t wanna!” he said, and stuck out his tongue.

“Robert!” Pearl felt herself blush. *How dare he!*

“It’s all right,” Risa said. “I know everything is new. But Mr. Robert,” she said, more sternly as she addressed him, “that is not the way we who love Jesus act, now is it?”

He dropped his eyes and turned his face away, but shook his head.

“What should you do now, Sweetie?” Risa asked him.

He sighed, and shrugged his shoulders, and Risa almost laughed. “Say I’m sorry, I guess,” he said.

“Okay, go tell that to your sister and give her a big hug. You know she’s trying to help you.”

He grimaced, but stood up and walked stiffly, to Pearl. “Sorry, Sissie!” he said, and gave her a sort of hug, barely touching her.

Pearl grabbed him close. “Robert, I forgive you, you little—brother!” She tried to smile, and tickled him. He started to giggle, and the other kids laughed.

Seeing him smile melted her heart and she hugged him close. “I love you, Rob-Rob!”

He clung to her for a moment, then ran back to Risa. “I pray now!” he said, and grabbed her hand and said, “Jesus! Ms. Risa is the best teacher! I love her and please give her a big hug!”

Risa laughed in delight. “Thank you, Robert! What a sweet prayer! Be sure and come back Wednesday night, and we will have AWANA. I will be your teacher.”

“Great!” Robert said, and jumped up and down.

“Great job, working together, guys,” Risa said. God loves teamwork!”

She looked at her cell again. “All right, we have five minutes left. Let’s join hands and pray quietly with each other over these packets and those who will receive them.”

Risa walked over to Robert and held out her hands. “Robert, would you pray with me for these people to know Jesus?”

“Yes!” he said, grabbing her hands. “Deah Jesuz, help *all* deese people meet Ya!” he said. “And go to Heaven wit us!”

“Rob, talk right!” said Pearl. *He’s usually too shy to pray, but he is bold today, she thought. Good deal.*

Risa looked at Pearl and smiled. “It’s okay,” she said. “God hears and answers simple, sincere prayers too—in every language!” She laughed. “Class, Jesus is a Jew, not an American, thank goodness! He even hears prayers like, ‘Help, LORD!’ and He answers! Never forget that He is always with you.”

“Now let’s clean up,” she said, “and I’ll see you guys Wednesday night!”



## Chapter Eleven — Riding High

At breakfast, Pearl had an idea. “Uncle Burt, what if Rob and I help you with your chores, and then you can teach us to ride even before Robin and Lucas get here? Then we’ll already have some practice time in, and can help them.”

“Well now,” said her uncle, as he flipped over a thick pancake, “that sounds like a great idea. I could use some help, and your mother can do what she needs to do—like take a nap or something.”

So the kids helped Burt, then he took them to the barn after lunch. “Good job wearing your running shoes. Never get on a horse barefoot!”

He put the blankets on the horses and secured the saddles, then put the bridles on. “I’m in a hurry today, but I know you could do this, Pearl,” he said.

He helped them mount. “I’ll let each of you ride a horse and I will lead you.”

“Awww, I was hoping I could guide Aurora myself,” said Pearl. “Please?”

“Sweetie, be patient,” he said. “Robert will want to ride by himself if I let you do it, and you know he is way too little for that.”

“Okay...thanks for letting us ride again,” she said.

“That’s my girl.”

Once outside, Burt helped them get the horses ready and mount. “I’m going to take you guys on a walk to the back of the property,” he said. “Since we’re on a mountain, there’s a great view of the river, and you’ll love it, okay? Just be sure not to kick the horses or jump off or anything like that. Got it, Rob?”

“Yes, let’s go!” he said.

“That’s a lot of walking for you, Uncle Burt!”

“It’s okay—this will give your mom some time. Plus, I need to walk the property anyway.” He reached down and looked in his boot.

“What are you doing, Unc?” said Robert.

“Just making sure that I’ve got my little silver gun. It’s tiny, but very effective against snakes and such.”

Pearl shivered. *LORD, thank You that we are going to have only good things on this ride!*

“When we get back,” he said, and rose up, “we’ll have homemade peace ice cream.”

“Yum! I want a big bowl!” Pearl said.

“You got it. Now let’s go, kids!” Burt started walking across the field, leading the horses.

Robert was looking around, wiggling with excitement. “I’m so high! I’m so high!”

Splash whinnied and tossed her head, as if she agreed.

Burt laughed. “Yes, Bub. You’re excited, and Splash doesn’t mind. Just don’t fall off, okay?”

They walked through the peach orchards first. “No more peaches for this year, but we had a good crop.” he said. “The apples should be ready early next week, I think. If you two want to earn some extra money, I’ll let you help me and the others.”

“Sure,” Pearl said. “I’ll help.” She saw lots of apples on trees that went as far as she could see.

As they walked, squirrels scampered before them. The branches were close and Rob reached out and grabbed some fruit.

Burt stopped the horses. “Rob,” he said, “please leave them on the tree so they can finish getting ready. But you can feed that one to Splash when we stop, okay?”

“Okay, I’ll hold it.”

“Tell you what,” Burt said, “You need both hands for riding—hold on and stretch so Splash can reach around and eat the apple you got her.”

She ate it in one bite.

“Wow, that was quick!” Robert said.

“Yes. Pearl, pick one for Aurora, too.”

She gave one to Aurora, and it disappeared just like Splash’s did.

“These are red delicious,” Burt said. “The horses love ‘em, and I bet you guys do too, right?”

“In apple pie,” Pearl said. “With lots of cinnamon!”

“Me too,” her uncle replied. “Mrs. Risa bakes a yummy pie, so we’ll be sure to give her a couple baskets full.”

They walked for a few more minutes and came to a clearing on the other side. There was a little brook there, and they saw a flash of brown and white.

“A deer!” Pearl said.

“And look, there’s the baby!” said Rob. “It’s so cute!”

“Not as cute as you, Bub!” Burt said, as he led the horses to the brook for a drink.

“I want a deer,” said Robert. “Can I have the baby?”

“Rob, the baby has to stay with its mama, so she can take care of it.”

Rob nodded, “Yeah, okay. But deer are neat.”

“Deer are nice,” Burt said, “as long as they leave my gardens alone. They like to eat peas; I think sometimes they think I’ve planted them just for them! And some of them get on their hind legs and eat the apples off the lower branches of the trees. But I have plenty so that’s all right. If I shoot one this fall, it’ll be even better, ‘cause it’ll be apple-flavored!”

“Aw, Uncle Burt!” Pearl protested. “Don’t shoot those pretty deer!”

He chuckled. “Pearl, I wouldn’t do that, unless they really did become a problem. Even good things have to be stopped if they are causing damage. But there are bobcats and such around—“

“Really?!”

“Oooh, wild cats!” said Robert.

“Yes, Pearl, and bobcats and mountain lions eat deer,” Burt said, talking over his shoulder to them. “We’re in the mountains, remember?”

He continued. “So if you guys are in the woods hiking or on a trail ride or anywhere you ever feel weird or smell urine really strong, then you need to first plead the Blood of Jesus over yourself and remember that God’s angels are around you protecting you. You also need to take your cell phone with you, and call me if you think there is danger.”

“I don’t have one yet,” said Pearl.

“Oh, okay. Well, I can see how you haven’t needed one till now, Pearl, but I believe that is about to change. Just remember it is a *tool*, not a toy. Okay?”

“Great!” Pearl shouted. *Thank You, Jesus!*

“I want a cell phone too!” said Robert.

“Rob, you have a few years to do, but we can get you an electronic game or something,” Burt said.

Robert nodded his head, happy at the idea.

“Kids, listen,” Burt said, “God is faithful and He knows everything about your life before you do it, so

He is always working to keep you safe—even if you don't get something you want till later. Trust me.”

He nodded. “Also, there may be times you plan something and then, you get this feeling that you really should not do it. He often doesn't tell us why—but He always knows best. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd; He is the Prince of Peace.**”

Burt dropped the reins and stroked the horses' noses. “Jesus always has your back to protect you, so you can't have a bad attitude if He changes your plans. Got it? I'm sure your mother has told you that.”

“Yes Sir, we know,” Pearl said. “But can I still go on trail rides?”

“You can work up to that, Pearl,” said her uncle, “but you must stay on the trails I mark out for you, and you must take your cell phone. *Understand?*”

“Yes, Sir!”

Burt picked the reins back up and started leading the horses again. “Now, let's cross this little brook, and we'll be in my pecan orchard,” he said. “I have 100 trees,” he said, and pointed. “The papershells are the big nuts that crack really easy.”

Pearl saw several squirrels. “Do they eat your pecans?”

“Maybe some,” he said. “But not much.” He laughed. “They probably consider this to be God’s nut buffet.”

“That’s funny,” Pearl said. “Hey, what are those little bitty ones that are hard to crack?” she said.

“Those are native pecans,” he said. “They do make the best-tasting pie.”

“Hmm. Does Ms. Rita make pecan pies too?”

Burt smiled. “She is good at everything she does. But why don’t you learn to make one for homeschool—science class or something?”

“Maybe. I can talk to Queen Mother.”

“Darlin’, why do you call her that? I don’t think she likes it much.”

Pearl’s heart hurt. “Well, Uncle Burt, that’s what royalty calls their mother the queen when their father the king has died,” she said, as calmly as she could.

“Sweetie....Father God is the King—but never mind,” Burt said. “Let’s see the river!”

They got through the pecan orchard and then came to another clearing. The land went uphill.

“I can hear water!” Pearl said. *I love the sound of running water! It’s so peaceful.*

“Yes, it’s the Buffalo River,” he said. “Your grandparents’ parents had the great vision to invest in this land and plant all of these trees, so we could enjoy it too,” he said. “When you guys decide where you want your house to be, we’ll have the plans drawn up.”

“I want to live right by the river!” Pearl said.

“I understand, Pearl. That may be possible. It is really up to your mother, you know. But till then, we could bring a tent and camp out here or something.”

“Yeah!” Pearl said. “Can we before it gets cold?”

“We’ll see,” he said, as he led the horses to the crest of the hill. “Look!”

“Wow!” Pearl said. The river was wide, and flowing swiftly through the tall bluffs of stone on either side. There was a lovely waterfall coming out of the other side of the rock, and birds flew back and forth. The evergreens made a nice backdrop for the many colors of leaves on the trees and bushes.

“Pretty!” said Robert. “Let’s swim!”

“No, Rob, this is not a place for swimming,” said Burt. “It’s much too deep and swift here. We’ll have to go to further downstream to swim. I thought about digging a small lake on the place—“

“Yeah! With a slide!” Robert said.

“And a waterfall!” Pearl said.

“I’ll let you know,” said Burt. “Let’s go back. Who wants peach ice cream?”

“Me!” said Pearl and Robert together.

*It just gets better with You, Jesus!* she thought.

After the ride, they had ice cream, then a nap. When Pearl woke, it was almost time for Robin and Lucas to get out of school. Robert kept sleeping, so he stayed with his mother in the house.

Pearl splashed water on her face and put on her jeans and shoes, and put her long hair in a ponytail. “This is going to be so great!” she told herself in the mirror. *And I’m glad Robert won’t be there!* But then she felt a bit guilty.

*A P.O.W.E.R. Princess is not selfish,* she heard her daddy say in her heart. *Sorry, Daddy God, but it’s the truth. He doesn’t have to do everything I do!*

Risa drove up a few minutes later and they were all ready to go. “Great to see you guys and have fun!” said Risa. “Lucas and I’ll be in the house with Charlotte.”

Watchman danced around them, and Lucas patted him before he went inside.

“Homework’s all done, right, sweeties?” Burt asked the girls as he swung the saddle onto Aurora’s back. She stood quietly and stuck out her nose in greeting.

“Yes Sir!” said Robin.

He looked at their shoes. “Good job on wearing tennis shoes. If you don’t wear boots, tennis shoes are the next best thing. Never wear flip flops or sandals. You need your feet covered.”

“We want to ride to the pond and back while there is still some light, okay?” said Pearl.

“Hold your horses, ladies.” Burt laughed at his own joke as he put the saddle on Splash. The girls giggled.

“I’m going to lead you—“

“But I thought we got to do this by ourselves!” Pearl burst out.

“Patience, Princess. You will sit by yourselves and I’ll give you the reins at the pond. We’re going slowly to make sure you understand everything—and to keep your mother calm.”

Burt helped Pearl and Robin mount.

Pearl felt more at ease this time, and patted Aurora. “You are such a pretty Palomino,” she said, then dropped her voice.

“You rode already?” asked Robin.

“We bugged Uncle Burt till he gave in,” Pearl said. “I’m a pushover for those I love,” he replied. “But I can be firm when I need to be.”

“We really appreciate you letting us ride, Mr. Williams!” Robin said.

“My pleasure. Please call me Burt, sweetie, although I know your mom would be thankful for your respect. After you ride to the pond and back, I’ll tell you about the surprise!”

“Oh, Uncle Burt, give us a hint, please!” Pearl said.

“Not a hint for now, but just look at God’s sunset!” Burt said.

“Gorgeous!” said Robin, who whipped out her phone and took a pic. “And the moon is out, too. Pearl, Horse Girl, pose for me!”

Pearl pretended to tip a hat and smiled big. “I want a copy!” she said, and giggled. “You can email it to me, okay? Queen Mother will have to let me online.”

Watchman trotted beside Burt, who shook his head and started walking with the horses. “Back in the olden days,” he said, pretending to talk like a very old man, “you’d have to send off the 35 millimeter film and wait a week or so to get it back through snail mail for a picture! Amazing how fast things are now.”

“Don’t you text and email?” Pearl asked. *Surely my cool uncle does those!* “Queen Mother won’t let me yet, but she uses those with her clients.”

“I don’t use them that much,” he said. “Computers and phones are good overall, but remember they are tools, not toys. Don’t let them take all your time... And no texting while riding, Miss Robin!” he teased.

The girls laughed. “We use laptops or tablets at school,” Robin said.

“Yeah, I want one,” Pearl said, sounding disappointed, “but since we’re doing homeschool, Mom says books and paper work just fine. Anyway,

maybe when I turn 12 next spring, I can have a computer of my own.”

She was silent a few moments as they rode. They stopped and admired the light on the water.

Burt handed the girls the reins. *Yeah*, thought Pearl.

“Can you talk to her about me getting a phone or a computer, Uncle Burt? Maybe for Christmas?”

“Hmmm, planning ahead are we? If I remember right, your birthday is in May.” He walked carefully over a rock and led the horses around a big stump.

Watchman climbed over it, then jumped in. He thrashed about happily, barking with joy.

Burt smiled. “Good for you to get a bath, dog!”

He touched Aurora’s reins lightly. “Girls, you can nudge the horses to go forward to the water, then loosen the reins. They will probably get a drink.”

They did, and the horses drank deeply.

“Can we go back now?” *Wow, I get to ride Aurora all by myself and guide her and everything!*

“Hold on, Pearl, let’s pause a few more minutes and just enjoy this beauty, okay?” said Burt, sitting on a

big stump by the water. “The trees look like they are on fire! And we have a full moon tonight!”

“I love to see sunsets,” Robin said. She got her camera back out.

“You mean takes pictures in the dark?” Pearl said.

“Well, it’s not night yet, really, just a sunset, but yes—it has a night setting that I used last year for some really cool Christmas light shots.”

“I want one like that,” Pearl said.

“Oh, they’re not expensive,” Robin said.

“We’ll see,” said Burt. “Daddy God is a big, generous God and His pocketbook has no end! Why don’t you write out a **petition**?”

“Petition?” Pearl said. “What’s that?”

“Isn’t that something official, like law papers or something?” said Robin.

“That’s right. .... Tell you what, I’ll teach you kids and your moms about that. How about Friday night?”

“Well, Mr. Burt,” said Robin, “I apologize, but that night we really need to finish stuff ready for the Hallelujah Hayride and Festival. How about later?”

“Oh, that’s right,” said Burt. “And Risa may even need my help...Let’s just set it up for the next Friday. You guys can come over and I’ll grill or something.”

“Yum!” said Pearl.

“Great!” said Robin. “Deal!”

“Now, said Burt, let’s be quiet for a bit, so we can hear the whippoorwills.”

They hushed and sat still, enjoying the lovely lake, the deep purple-reds of the Bradford pear trees and the bright orange-reds and yellows of the oaks. They felt a slight wind and heard some locusts far off, then the *galump!* sound of a bullfrog. As they sat, the sun sank lower into the horizon, they heard the bird, faint at first, then louder.

“A whippoorwill!” Pearl said. “I hear it! It sounds like it says its name.”

“Now,” he said, handing the girls the reins, “Pearl, you ride Aurora behind me. Robin, you guide Splash beside her, okay?”

Pearl and Robin smiled at each other.

Suddenly, Splash whinnied and backed up and over, bumping into Aurora and pressing against Pearl’s leg.

Burt grabbed the reins of both horses to steady them and pull them back from the pond's edge.

“Quiet, girls, I think it’s a snake,” he said in a low command, then pulled out his flashlight and the gun from his boot so quickly that Pearl was amazed.

*“Ewwww! Help us, LORD!”*

“Yuck!” said Robin.

Burt shot into the mud at the edge of the water, and this time both horses whinnied and backed up. In the moonlight, the girls could see the snake slithering and surging in the water.

*Oh my gosh, it looks 10 feet long!* thought Pearl. She was glad to be up high.

It struck her uncle’s boot!

“You are dead, snake!” he said, and shot again.

This time, the thing stopped moving. “So shall all our enemies be exposed and defeated, never to rise again!” he said.

He shined the flashlight on its head, that now lay limp on the bank. “Nasty water moccasins!” he said, and kicked the carcass into the water. “Thank You, LORD, for helping me kill it and keeping us all safe!”

He shook his head. "I'm going to have to put out sulphur or something, 'cause I am not putting up with this," he said.

"Mr. Burt, you could get a cat," Robin said.

"Hey, that is a great idea," said Burt. "I just need to make sure it likes to hunt snakes."

"We have one mama cat that hunts, and she is going to have kittens soon," she said. "You could have some."

"They need to stay far from the bunnies!" said Pearl.

"Good job, Pearl. That is exactly right," said her uncle. "And good job girls, about this snake thing!" He patted the horses and took the reins. "My apologies, but we are going back, and you can take the reins another time. Also, please keep this quiet, because it would just scare your mothers and Robert,"

He started walking quickly and the ride back was a little less smooth. But they returned safe and sound.

No one talked, *Thank You, LORD, You are faithful!  
You're always watching over us!*

## Chapter Twelve — Vision List

“Uncle Burt, you forgot to tell us about the surprise last night!”

Pearl stuck her fork in the pile of three delicious hot pancakes her mother had just put on her plate. “Yum, blueberry. My favorite!”

“Mine too!” Robert said, then took a big drink of milk.

Vivace, nestled at Pearl’s feet under the table, whined a little. Pearl peeped at her and whispered, “I may accidentally drop part of my pancake for you, huh? You like blueberries, right?”

“Pearl, don’t make a mess on the floor,” her mother said, as she turned a pancake.

“How does she do that?” said Pearl. “She can’t even see me!”

“Surely you know mothers can see from the back of their heads, don’t you, Princess?” Burt laughed. “We know that our mama sure did, didn’t she, Charlotte?”

“No joke!” she said, turning around. “Through walls!”

“Yeah. Be sure and thank your mother, kids,” said Uncle Burt as he put some pancakes on his plate. “Our good mama taught us to say, ‘Thank You’ for everything, and it sure has come in handy.”

“By the way,” he said, smiling at his sister, “Thank you, Charlotte. You are a good cook!”

“Well, you’ve been doing most of the cooking since we moved in, and I felt I needed to do something other than the cake you helped me with the other night,” she said. “But thank you for saying thank you.”

“Thank you, Mama!” said Robert, and turned and stuck out his tongue at his sister. “Beat ya, Pearl!”

“Stop it, Robert,” said Pearl.

Then sweetly she said, “Thank you, Queen Mother. Your pancakes are the best!”

“You are welcome, sweet peas,” said their mother, as she put more batter on the griddle. “Pearl, I’m going to teach you to make these soon.”

“Great, I’ve been wanting to learn to cook!” said Pearl, then ate another bite. “Now, Uncle Burt, tell us—what is the surprise? Please, please?”

Burt smiled and held up a finger, so he could finish chewing before he spoke.

“You mean surprises.”

“Two?” Pearl was getting excited.

He smiled. “Well, sort of. You’ll see!”

“When?” Pearl said. “Give us a hint, *pleeeeeeeez!*”

“Bible study and breakfast first, kiddos,” he said.

“Oops, I left mine in my room,” said Pearl. “Excuse me, I’ll be right back!” She walked past Vivace, who tried to follow her “No, Vivace, stay!” The dog whined, but sat back on her pillow.

Pearl got her *Adventure Bible* from her night stand and took her place at the table.

Her mother handed Robert a printed sheet. “Robert, please read this. King David wrote it. Remember him? He watched the sheep and sang to the LORD and played on his harp, and he and God had a wonderful time. This is one of King David’s most famous writings—Psalm 23.”

“He was a shepherd and Jesus is our Good Shepherd,” said Pearl.

“I want a sheep,” Robert said. “Mama, will you read it to me?”

His mother smiled. “No, Sweetie. You are 8—you can read this silently while you eat, okay? And I will read it in my Bible. And are you sure you haven’t found your Bible yet?”

Pearl shook her head. “Maybe we’ll find it when we straighten his room.”

“We hope so,” her mother said, and opened her Bible. “Rob, if we don’t find your Bible, we will get you a new one soon. I know you love your Jesus Book!”

“Queen Mother,” Pearl asked between bites, “I was reading in Psalms and thinking about King David playing a harp. Was the one he played like the harps at concerts?”

“I’m sure it was much smaller,” said her mother, “since he had it out in the field with him, and then he also would take it and play it for King Saul, so it couldn’t have been too big. But the main thing is that he used it to bring glory to the LORD. God loves it when we worship, and He lives in our praise!”

“I thought He lives in Heaven,” said Robert.

“He does, Rob, and He also lives in your heart, right?” He didn’t reply, but was busy eating.

She touched his head softly and continued. “God is a Spirit, and He is everywhere at once. What I meant is that our praise and worship magnify Him—you know, like when you use a magnifying glass to look at a bug and it looks much bigger than it really is?”

Pearl could hear the respect for God in her mother’s voice. “But God is already *so huge* we can’t even really imagine how big He is, but our praise and worship are kind of like a magnifying glass to help us remember and rejoice at how awesome He is!”

“Wow, I bet the angels are worshiping Him, and King David is playing his harp,” said Pearl.

“Probably!” said her mother.

“Hey, it would be so cool to have a harp. Can I get one, Queen Mother? How much are they?”

Her mother looked surprised. “A harp? I don’t know, but why would you want a harp? Even schools don’t use them, and they are most likely very expensive. Besides, I don’t know anyone who could teach you.”

“That would be neat, though,” Pearl said. “Maybe we can go to a museum and ask them or something.”

“Put it on your Vision List,” said her mother. “God knows all things, and with Him, anything is possible. I never thought we’d move to Arkansas and start building a house, but here we are! Ephesians 3:20!”

“What does that say?” said Pearl.

“That the LORD does much more than we can ask or imagine, and always does us good, even if it’s something we’ve never thought of.”

“Do you have a Vision List, Queen Mother?”

“No, but your dad had suggested it several times. I did help him write one for our family. I think it’s in my study Bible.”

“Charlotte, I think Pearl has a great idea,” said Burt.

“Can I see it?” said Pearl.

“I just want to get our stuff in order and get back to work, and then start planning for homeschool in January,” said her mother. “Then there is Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the house plans for the spring—“

“Sis, relax,” said Burt. “It was just an idea.”

“What’s a List?” asked Robert.

“You write down the stuff you want to happen, and pray about it and He answers,” said Pearl. She smiled. “He’s already answered at least two of mine!”

“Great, Princess!” said her Uncle. “We’ll do that Sunday evening, after dinner. It won’t be hard. God will help us.” He patted his sister on the shoulder and said, “No worries, Charlotte. Relax!”

“All right,” but I have enough to do right now,” she said.

“What are you reading, Uncle Burt?” Pearl said. “And how many Bibles do you have?”

“Right now, I’m reading I Thessalonians 5,” he said, and I have many Bibles. This is one of the blessings of living in a free country!” He nodded. “I do my regular Bible study early in the mornings, about 4 a.m. None of you are up that early—not even Charlotte,” he said, and chuckled. “But God and I have some good quiet time.”

“If nobody’s talking, then how do you hear God and how does He hear you?” Robert asked.

“I’m sure your mother has told you that God often whispers on the inside. You usually don’t hear Him speak out loud. He is with us, in our hearts. *Forever!*”

Uncle Burt's eyes looked very tender to Pearl. *It seems like he's looking way off somewhere*, she thought.

“The LORD is a spirit—like your mom said,” Burt told them. “We can't see Him or touch Him, but He is so real! He talks to our hearts. Usually the way He speaks is by giving us an idea to do something.”

“That's right,” said their mother, coming back into the kitchen, looking much more peaceful. “Remember, Pearl? I've told you that, if an idea to do something comes to you several times, and it's good and you have peace about and want to do it, it's almost always **the sweet Holy Spirit of God** leading you.

She smiled. “He is very patient. Sometimes I've been so busy that He's had to nudge me several times to pray, or call someone and encourage them, or even go give something to someone—and it turns out that it was exactly what they needed. He knows all things!”

She flipped the pancakes on the griddle. “The LORD is very patient, thank goodness. He loves us and knows we want to please Him! He is so good!”

“Yes He is!” said Burt. “And your daddy on earth was very kind, but the LORD is even more kind. He *is* Goodness. He *is* Mercy. He *is* Love.”

“Speaking of love,” he said, and smiled big, “I know you kids love me and your mom so much that you’re going to clean up the kitchen for us while we do some other things we need to do around the house, right?”

There was no answer. Both Pearl and Robert stuffed their mouths with pancakes and pretended to ignore him, but their giggles gave them away.

He turned to their mother. “Hmmm, Charlotte, it seems our kids have lost their ears.”

At this, they giggled again. Pearl pointed to her ears and Robert’s, as if to say *They’re still here!* She and Robert looked at each other and then at the ceiling and the floor, still pretending to ignore him.

“Dear Sister!” Burt said, then threw his head back and slapped the back of his hand against his forehead in mock melodrama. “I know you’ve taught them this, but—here we go: ‘Repetition is how we learn; repetition is how we learn,’—right, kids?”

He chuckled loudly at his own joke. They groaned, both familiar with that homeschool cheer that their mother had engrained in them through the years.

Alarmed at the sound of the kids in distress, Vivace barked and jumped up from her blanket in the corner.

They all laughed. “Peace, Vivace!” said their mother. “Sit!”

“Now kids, it’s not that bad!” she said, and smiled. “Listen to your uncle. He’s pretty wise—he’s even taught me a few things, huh Burt?”

*It’s good to see Mother laugh and smile more, Pearl thought. Thank You, God! And I still want a harp, so You’ll have to talk to her about it, please.*

“Sure, I taught you a few things,” he said, “like how to swim and read and drive—and how to tell whether a guy should be your boyfriend or not. But our parents taught us to love God and follow Him. I’m so glad!”

“I miss Grandpa and Grandma,” Pearl said. “But I know they are enjoying being with Daddy!”

She felt better at the thought of them all in Heaven. “I bet they are having marvelous adventures with Jesus, and probably, Daddy’s fishing in the crystal sea or riding his motorcycle around the mountains or maybe even jumping things with it!”

She smiled at the thought.

“Yes,” her mother said, sitting down to eat. “Your dad was quite a daredevil, that’s for sure.” Her face

showed a half-smile. “And he won a lot of souls for Jesus, including bikers. So not all of them are bad!”

“Really,” Burt said, “most people are not bad people, bikers or not. And bikers are just like everyone else, only they ride motorcycles and wear more black leather, even in the summer.”

He shook his head. “It’s sad, but so many people don’t know the LORD or how to find Him, so they just do whatever they think or see or hear other people doing, even if it’s bad. They just try to find something to do while they’re wandering around on this earth!”

He poked at the pancakes on his plate and said, “From what I’ve seen, I think the main reason people get into trouble is that they are bored and don’t have direction. Even unsaved people do much better when they have a purpose, especially if they know how to do something well, and feel they are making a difference.”

“Yeah, and Jesus is what it’s all about!” said Pearl.

“You got it,” he replied, and reached for another pancake. “And that’s why we are on the planet—to help people become His friend.”

“Where is Daddy’s motorcycle?” asked Robert. “With Daddy?” He threw down his fork and started crying.

“I want Daddy! I want to ride on his motorcycle!” He looked up and said, “Jesus, send Daddy back!”

Vivace whined and stood up on the chair.

Pearl and her mother walked over to Robert and comforted him, and prayed over him. His head was down on the table, and Pearl hugged him and whispered something in his ear, then rubbed his head and tickled him, trying to get him to laugh.

“Stop it, Pearl!” he said.

Pearl whispered in his ear again then pointed at Uncle Burt. Robert, tears still on his face, smiled and said, “I want to ride on *your* motorcycle, Uncle Burt!”

“You do, son? Hmm. Is this what Sissy said?” He pretended to be sad. “Don’t you like the horse?”

“Horses are too slow!” said Robert. “And you can’t do tricks on them like with motorcycles!”

Everyone laughed, and then Pearl said, in a very confident voice, “You can too, Roberto. Horses can do much better tricks than motorcycles!”

“Cannot!” Robert frowned at her and stuck out his lower lip.

Can too—especially The Lipizzans!” said Pearl. “Hey Queen Mother, when can we see them? I want to take Robin. And ride one! So I need to go to Spain!”

“Slow down, Pearl,” said her mother. “Spain? You mean Austria, right?”

“Well, it’s the *Spanish Riding School*,” said Pearl slowly, as if her mother didn’t understand.

“Yes, but the school is not in Spain, Pearl,” said her mother, smiling a bit. “It’s in a little country called Austria. Only people who are highly trained get to ride those horses.”

“Is Austria where the kangaroos are?” said Pearl.

Her uncle and mother laughed. “No, Pearl,” said Burt. “I’ve been there and there are no kangaroos. They are from *Australia*, a much, much bigger place for all those ‘roos and their big tails to jump!”

He got up and picked up the globe from the living room and put it on the dining table. He spun it around and Robert jumped up and spun it more.

“Rob,” said Burt, pointing, “put your finger right there.”

Rob obeyed, and said, “Whoops! I got jelly on the world! Hahaha!”

“I wish it were that easy to make it sweeter!” Burt joked.

Pearl chuckled. “Good one, Uncle Burt!”

“Robert, dry your hands before you touch anything else,” said their mother, then wiped the globe clean. “Pearl, come see,” Burt said. “This big country below the equator is Australia, where the kangaroos and koala bears are—

“Oh, koalas are soooo cute!” said Pearl. “It would be neat to have one as a pet!”

“Only for a bit,” said her mother. “Mostly what they do is eat and sleep, and you’d get bored with them.”

“Hmm,” said Pearl. “Well, how about a Lipizzan?”

Her mother looked shocked. “Pearl, those are very expensive horses, and the correct name is *Lipizzaner*,” said her mother. “Besides, your uncle has some good horses for you to ride care for.”

“You like my horses, right?” said Burt.”

“Yes Sir!” said Pearl. “They are great!”

“Now,” Burt continued, pointing to a small place in Europe, “this tiny country between Italy and Hungary and Germany is Austria. Lots of conflict there, and

that was part of the challenge with the Lipizzaner horses. They used to only belong to royalty—“

“Well, *I’m* royalty!” said Pearl, in a queenly voice.

“Yes, you are!” her mother said, and Burt nodded.

“Like you say, Queen Mother,” said Pearl, “with God, all things are possible!”

“Yes, but...” her mother turned to wipe the counter. *She doesn’t seem too excited*, Pearl thought. *Anyway, God, You can do it! You know it’s on my Vision List!*

“Hmmm,” said Pearl’s mother. “Austria is a very long way from America.” She looked a bit sad, then said in a teasing voice, “I don’t think you’d want to swim that far, Pearl-Girl!”

“Swim? No way!” Pearl said. “I’d have to get on a plane. Wow. That would be way up high!”

“Well, Charlotte, they now have Lipizzans in America,” said Burt.

“Let’s go see them!” said Pearl.

“Kiddos, why don’t we finish breakfast and chores, then see the surprises,” their uncle said.

They groaned again in unison, and again Vivace barked and jumped up, anxious to know that everything was all right with her masters.

Burt burst out laughing. “How do you do that? At least you agree on something!”

“All right,” he said, “please clean the kitchen—but I’ll get the griddle. Sweep too. After that, clean your rooms, and then we’ll see what else is going on—like surprises, plural!”

“Pearl, remember to be sweet when you help Robert, all right?” her mother said, as she left the kitchen.

“Yes ma’am!” Pearl started getting stuff off the table. *God, please help me be sweet! she prayed. And help the time pass so we can see the surprises!*

*And show me how I can get a Lipizzan. And a harp!*

## Chapter Thirteen—Helping and Healing

“Okay, Rob, you did a pretty good job helping me, so thanks,” Pearl said. “Now go to your room and pull stuff out of your closet—you know, in the boxes? Take the stuff out and put it on your bed, and I’ll help you figure out where to put it so you can find it, okay?”

“Nah, I don’t wanna do that. I wanna play with my truck,” he said, and started to leave the kitchen.

*I’m being nice to him and he’s being rude to me, Daddy God!* “I know, but we have to,” Pearl said, trying to be patient. “I’ll help you to fix your room so we can see the surprises!”

“No!” he said, and ran out the door and up the stairs.

“Ugh!” she said. “Brat!” and wiped her hands on the towel. “God, I’m not gonna help him. He can do it himself! I have my own room to clean up!”

Pearl heard footsteps, and heard her mother put the vacuum back in the hall closet. Her mother walked

over, with a slight frown on her face. “What was that, Pearl? Is Robert giving you a problem?”

“You mean, when is he *not* giving me a problem?” Pearl said.

“Hasn’t he done better lately?”

“I don’t know, maybe some. He did pretty good in the kitchen. I tried to make it fun for him, like a game.”

“Well that was sweet. You’re a very smart girl.”

“But now he says he doesn’t need my help, which is great with me, actually,” Pearl said. “I’m going to clean my room, and he can just do his.”

Her mother touched her shoulder and whispered, “Pearl, I think Robert is still uncomfortable with this moving thing, and I think he’s afraid.”

“Of what? His toys?” Pearl noticed her words were sharp. “I apologize, Queen Mother, but I just—“

Her mom hugged her close. “Sweetheart, you are so mature, and I appreciate you! You have been very brave for Robert. Believe it or not, he really does look up to you, so ask the LORD to help you be gentle.”

“I have ... sometimes,” Pearl said.

“Thank you,” said her mother softly.

Then she talked business again. “Go Rob’s room and if he won’t help you, then just let him play while you pull out the boxes and sacks and such and empty them. Arrange things in stacks, and call me, and we’ll get this done.”

“Okay, Queen Mother,” Pearl said, and sighed. “I can listen to Christian music, though, right? And maybe that will perk him up.”

“Sure, Precious, just don’t turn it up very loud.”

“Gotcha!” Pearl ran up to her room and got her mp3 player. She put it in her pocket, and her earbuds around her neck. Robert was in the hall, playing with his remote control truck. He didn’t even look up.

She stepped over him and said, “Okay, Rob, time to clean your room!”

“Vroom! Vroom!” he said, and didn’t look at her.

She bent down and talked more loudly. “Robert, time to clean your room. Queen Mother said so!”

He looked up at her for a moment, but his stare was blank.

Pearl was confused. “What is wrong with you, Bub?” She touched him on his head. “Is your brain working?”

“Stop it, Pearl! I’m playing. You clean!”

She was just about to tell him what she thought of that when she saw Uncle Burt coming up the stairs. He put his finger to his lips, as if to tell her to not let Robert know he was there.

She smiled at Uncle Burt but thought, *Why do I have to do all the work?* she thought. *LORD, help me!*

Burt snuck up on Robert and grabbed him and lifted him up into the air, tickling Robert’s sides. “How’s my favorite nephew?” he said.

Robert squealed in pleasure and pounded on his uncle.

“Put me down, Unc, and play trucks with me!”

“All right,” Burt said, and folded up his tall, muscled frame to sit down on the carpet to play with his nephew. “Show me,” he said. He winked at Pearl.

“I’ll just be in here,” she said, walking toward Robert’s room and winking back at her uncle. *Ah, it will actually be easier and faster with me doing this myself!* she thought. *And I can listen to the music.*

She went into his room, turned on her mp3 player and turned up KLOVE, her favorite Christian radio station. The peppy, positive music energized her. “We can do this, Jesus, You and me—together!”

She looked at the boxes and bags and groaned a bit. “Hmmm ... Where should I start?”

She waited a bit, and had an idea to start dumping everything on his bed. *I'm glad Queen Mother has helped me learn to listen to God*, she thought. *But I need to listen more. Anyway, Jesus, let's do this, so we can go see the surprises!*

She grabbed the boxes and bags and emptied them onto the bed—except for the plastic bag full of rocks and wood pieces. Those needed to go in the closet, or in the driveway. *Guess I better ask Rob before I dump them in the gardens or something*, she thought.

She sorted and folded, humming to the music, and put things into the dresser and chest of drawers. It seemed easy, as she enjoyed the praise and worship songs.

She looked out the door into the hall, and saw Burt was sitting on the carpet, leaning against the wall, with Robert lying in his lap. They both seemed to be asleep. She heard Robert snore.

*Jesus, help him stop missing Daddy so his heart won't hurt any more. And me too.*

She turned around, picked up the bag of rocks, and opened the closet. *This is not too bad*, she thought, noticing there wasn't much in there but a few toys, a bagful of clothes, and something in the corner. *I'll be done fast! Then we can see the surprises!*

She put the clothes by the door, thinking they needed to go to the laundry room to be washed. Next she straightened the toys, then reached in the corner and pulled out a metal box.

Her heart jumped. *Dad's old tackle box!*

Tears came into her eyes and she was almost afraid to open it. *I wonder if Queen Mother knows he has this. Maybe I should just throw it away! Maybe I should put it in my room! What would a P.O.W.E.R Princess do?*

It was rusted, and she struggled with the fastener.

"Sweet Pearl," she heard her mother say softly, "what have you got there?"

Pearl pulled the earbuds out. "Sorry, I didn't hear you come in," she said, wiping the tears off her face. "It's Daddy's tackle box."

Her mother bit her lip and said, "He must have given it to Robert."

"Can I take it to my room?"

“Well—“

“I just thought that it might make Rob cry if he saw it,” Pearl said. “He probably forgot about it.”

“I suppose the moving men grabbed it,” said her mother, stepping back to look in the hall. “They are still asleep. Believe it or not, Robert usually knows what he has. He’ll probably notice it is missing, but pray he will forget—for now,” her mom said quietly.

Pearl finally opened the tackle box and they sat on the bed and pulled out things. “These were Daddy’s favorite lures, huh?” Pearl said, holding up some wild-looking feathery, shiny things without the hooks.

“Yes, I suppose,” said her mother and smiled a bit. “I see he was faithful to Robert-proof them.”

Pearl laughed. “Yeah, so he didn’t hook us!”

Her mother pulled out more items. “Looks like a seahorse skeleton and a dead lizard—“

“Yuck!” Pearl said, looking around for the trashcan. “He didn’t catch a seahorse, did he?” She brought it over and held it out.

Her mother dropped them in. “No, he had a saltwater aquarium long ago and the seahorse died. I have no

idea why he kept the skeleton...I suppose it's the same reason some people keep cow skulls."

She pulled out some coins and a duck call. "We are hiding this for sure!" her mother said, and grinned, "because I didn't have a duck—I had a boy!"

Pearl stifled a laugh and nodded. She reached in again and pulled out a golf ball and some corks.

"He must have rescued those, 'cause he certainly didn't know how to play golf," Pearl's mother said, and laughed. "I think the most fun he had on the golf course was riding the cart through the sprinkler!"

Pearl giggled.

"I can see him trying to pop a wheelie with the golf cart—that he put a souped-up engine on!" she said.

*A.P.O.W.E.R. Princess has joy! God, help me have joy all the time!*

Pearl's mother was laughing silently, with happy tears rolling down her cheeks. "Yes, and he probably rescued his corks from the water too!"

Pearl laughed again. "He didn't catch many fish, did he Queen Mother?" she whispered.

This time, Pearl pulled out a plastic bag. It was a pocket sized New Testament.

“Not many to eat. But he sure did catch a lot of spiritual fish—people!” her mother said, and nodded her head. She smiled as she saw the Bible. She opened the bag and took it out, lovingly touching the pages.

“Jimmy was one of God’s best fishermen! The edges are ragged—see? I bet he showed a lot of verses to the people around him!”

“That’s great, huh? Daddy lived what he talked about.”

“Yes, Pearl, he did. That’s a rare man! God said in Proverbs that he who wins souls is wise. Really, that’s why we’re here on earth—to tell all the people about Jesus and how good He is, so they will want to go Home to Heaven with us!”

She hugged her daughter and smiled up at Heaven. “Come to think of it, I seem to remember he carried a boxful of Bibles and other Christian magazines and teaching CDs around with him, to give to people at the lake, or service stations, or restaurants, or such.”

Her eyes were shiny with tears, but she laughed. “The last few months, he’d ordered Bibles with large print, ‘cause he said many of the people fishing were older or said they couldn’t read the regular print. So the larger print gave them no excuse!”

“Right!” said Pearl. She reached into the bottom and felt something medal. It was a keyring, with a key!

Her mother saw it and caught her breath. “That’s to his motorcycle—but it must be a spare, because the other—“She took it and held it up. A golden eagle dangled on the other side from the key.

“Can I have it?” said Pearl.

Her mother hugged her, and Pearl thought she might be trying to hide a tear.

“Sweetie, I need this now,” she said. “Understand?”

“Yes ma’am.” Pearl said, and picked up the tackle box.

“Should we just throw this away? It’s pretty rusty.”

“Yes, put it in the trash. You know, I believe the LORD must have caused Rob to fall asleep, because it would have been hard on him to see this tackle box. It’s better that we got it out of the way.”

She stood up. “I’m going to let you choose a CD you want, for helping him—and me. You did a great job. Thank you so much.”

“Great! Tonight? Can I order it online?”

“This Saturday. Christian, of course.”

“Yes ma’am, the only kind I listen to!” said Pearl. She remembered many times hearing her daddy say, “*A true P.O.W.E.R. Princess guards her mind by putting God stuff in, so there’s no room for the bad!*”

“That’s my girl!” said her mother. “I wish I’d grown up doing that. The LORD had to wean me off all kinds of bad music. And it was hard. But He did, and I’m so glad! It’s just easier to live right!”

She left and Pearl sat on the bed, looking at the stuff from her dad’s box. She remembered good times with him, fishing and hiking, and just talking.

A noise made her realize she’d been daydreaming. *I’d better put this in a bottom drawer or something before Robert sees them.*

Burt came in, carrying a still-snoring Robert. He motioned to Pearl to pull back the covers, then put his nephew in the bed and pulled the covers over him.

He saw the stuff in her hand, then bent down to whisper, “Why don’t we finish by decorating his room? I have some special things he’ll like.”

He reached in his jacket and pulled out several sheets of puffy stickers—stars and planets and comets.

“Wow, that’s cool!” said Pearl, whispering still. “They need to go on the ceiling, right?”

“Yes,” said her Uncle, “and no standing in chairs! You can pull them off and hand them to me. First, though, take them to the bathroom and hold them close to the light, to charge ‘em up a few minutes. Then we’ll stick them on the ceiling and walls, and we’ll leave the light on a few minutes while he takes his bath, so they’ll show up really well!”

“You’re such a great uncle!” she said, whispering. “I’m so glad we’re here with you.”

“Same here, Pearl. I love you all! Now, he’s zonked out. Put the stuff down in the corner, and let’s get busy.”

They decorated quickly. “I only know the big and little dippers,” joked her uncle, but I bet he’ll like them all anyway! He was telling me how you and your dad liked to stare at the stars a lot. By the way, there are some great places to stargaze here,” he said.

When they finished, she woke Robert.

He burrowed further under the covers at first. Pearl couldn’t get him up, so her uncle tried. “Bub, don’t you want to see the surprise?”

Robert threw back the covers and sat up.

*He looks so cute with his hair all messed up,* thought Pearl.

“Surprise? Where?” said Robert, rubbing his eyes.  
“Light’s too bright! Turn it off!”

Pearl flipped the switch, forgetting the stars. Robert saw them. “*Heyyyyy!* Look!” he said, and pointed! “I have stars in my room!”

“You’re right!” said Burt. “Sissy and I just put them up. You snored right through it!” He laughed.

“Pretty!” said Robert, and he looked very happy.  
“They glow!”

Pearl’s heart felt warm. *I’m so glad he likes it!*

“That’s right, Bub. And that’s what we believers in Jesus do. We soak up His light, so we’ll glow too!”

Robert ran over and hugged his uncle’s knees. He laughed and said, “You need to thank your sissy. She cleaned up your room, and helped me with these.”

Robert ran and hugged her tightly. “Thanks!”

“Oomph!” said Pearl, but hugged him back. “I love you, Rob-Rob,” she said. *A P.O.W.E.R. Princess loves!*

She felt him relax. “I love you too, Sissy!” he said.  
“Thank you for cleanin’ it. Now I don’t have to!”

*I like him much better like this, Jesus! Thanks! Maybe I won't ship him off after all!* She giggled.

“What’s funny, Pearl?” asked Robert, looking up at his stars again.

“Nothing,” she said. “It’s just that you glow with Jesus love right now,” she said. “Like a star.”

“Good job, Rob,” said Burt. “How about, if it’s warm enough this weekend, we have a cookout and sleep under the stars in the field!” he said. “We could invite Risa and the kids.”

“Yeah!” Robert said. “I love living in the country!”

“Yes, and you’ll love living in the country for many reasons,” said his uncle. “Some of those reasons will arrive this afternoon!”

“Hey, the surprises, right?” said Pearl.

“You got it!” said Burt. “We’ll go out and see some of them in a minute.”

“But you said they are coming. Are they here already?”

“Well,” said Burt, with a mysterious tone, “You’ll see. There are some for now and some for later.”

“Wow!” said Robert. “Let’s go!” and he bolted for the stairs.

“All right,” said Burt. “You’re gonna have to hide your eyes in a minute. But wait till you get and outside!”



## Chapter Fourteen — Surprises Plural!

Burt led them out the door and to the barn. He made Watchman stay outside.

It was dark inside after the bright sunshine, but he turned on the light—and there in a pen were four adorable long-haired bunnies!

“Are these the surprises? Hey, can we have one?” said Robert, running over to them.

“Have one? I’m planning for you to take care of them. I’m giving them to you kiddos to raise, and you can show them at the county fair, and even sell them if you want. You may be able to raise babies, too.”

He picked up a cream-colored one and handed it to Pearl. She and Robert petted it.

“Soft!” he said.

“Put her down for now, Bub,” he said, and Robert gently took the bunny from Pearl, hugged it carefully, and put it in the pen.

*Wow, he was so sweet to the bunny!* “Good job, Rob!” Pearl said.

*A P.O.W.E.R. Princess helps others feel good about themselves.*

Her brother smiled. “Can I hold the others, Unc?”

“Not now. You kids go get a bowl and fill it with water for these cuties. Also, I put some hay in here so they can make a bed. They just got weaned, and I want you to feed them too.”

He showed them where the food was. “All kids should take care of animals, because it really teaches responsibility.”

“Yes, I take care of Vivace, and wow will she bark at these!” Pearl said.

“Pearl, keep your dog away from them,” he said.

*Uncle Burt looks so serious!* Pearl thought.

“I know you love Vivace like I love Watchman,” he continued, “but the animal instincts in our dogs might cause them to kill these lil’ ones.”

“What?” Pearl was shocked. “Vivace wouldn’t!”

“Remember when the bunny ran in front of us, and Watchman ran after it? He would have killed it if he’d caught it.”

Pearl shuddered. “I remember,” she said. “I guess he was hunting, huh?”

“As much as we love our pets, we have to remember they are *animals*—motivated by instinct,” he said. “They are in a class way below people, because people are made in the image and likeness of God.”

“Animals are often very intelligent. But they are *not* humans. And they never will be. We did not come from monkeys, and we don’t turn into them—or anything else.”

“Yes, Sir, Queen Mother taught us that,” said Pearl.

Burt’s voice became harsh. “If animals kill, it’s not because of jealousy or greed. That’s where they have us humans beat.”

“Aww, Uncle Burt!” said Pearl. “If I’m going to raise them, Vivace will have to be around some time!”

“Just make sure she stays at a distance,” he said firmly.

“Yes Sir.” *A P.O.W.E.R. Princess obeys, even when she doesn’t understand or like it*, Pearl thought. *Gee*,

*Daddy God, being a P.O.W.E.R. Princess is a lot of work! But worth it, right?*

But looked at his watch. He seemed disturbed. “I expected company by now,” he said.

“Who?” said Robert.

“You’ll see,” he said, mysteriously. “Let’s go back outside.”

At the barn, they saw their mother walking up with the cordless. “I was wondering where you guys went!”

she said, handing him the phone.

“Yes,” Burt told the person on the other end. “So no one was hurt? I could have helped you—but all is well? OK. See you in a bit.”

“What happened?” asked Pearl.

“No worries,” he said. “Our company will be here in a few minutes.”

“Who?” Robert asked.

“It’s a surprise,” their uncle said, and winked. “But I’m sure you’ll like it!”

“What are you up to, Burt?” their mother asked, and smiled.

“Another surprise!” said Robert.

“You kids can play if you want for now,” said Burt. “I will call you when the surprises arrive.”

“I’m getting my journal and music!” Pearl said.

“Robert, I need you to help me inside,” said his mom, grabbing his hand.

“I wanna play outside!” he said.

“No, let’s make chocolate chip cookies first,” she said. “You like them a lot, right?”

“Yum!” Robert said, happy now. He started running toward the house.

Pearl got her art pad and pencils, her journal and mp3 player, then hurried outside and climbed up to her treehouse, passing the stone fountain. *I really like the water flowing through the angel’s hands, she thought. I think I’ll draw that today!*

Joy surged in her. ***I AM the Living Water***, she heard the Holy Spirit say deep in her heart.

“Wow, yes. We humans are like fountains, when we let Your Spirit flow out, huh? I love You, Daddy God!” she said, when she sat down in her favorite spot.

From her perch in the treehouse, she looked down at the grounds. All was quiet, and except for the happy sound of bluebirds and an occasional car in the distance, she heard only the refreshing gurgle of water from one level to another.

*It is so peaceful here.* She opened her journal and started drawing the three-tiered fountain. “One level for You, God, one for Jesus, and one for the Spirit. Yeah.” *I’ll give this to Queen Mother, to remind her of the water of the Word.*

Then she heard a motor and a car door slam, then voices and what sounded like a horse. She looked toward the paddock, but Splash and Aurora had their heads down, they were grazing.

She heard a horse neigh, and Splash and Aurora raised their heads, curious. *It wasn’t them!*

*Maybe the surprise is a new horse—my new horse! A Lipizzan?*

She grabbed her stuff and hurried down the rope ladder, just in time to see a long pickup truck pulling a horse trailer by the fence.

Burt was walking beside it, carrying a paper bag, and driving was a man Pearl didn't know. But then she saw someone waving. It was Risa and Robin and Lucas!

She waved back, excited, and ran up to her uncle. "Hey guys! Did you bring us new horses?"

They nodded and smiled. "Hey!" said Robin. "Are you surprised?"

"For sure!" She looked through the slats and saw horsetails swishing, and heard horse whickers. *This is so great, God! Thank You!*

Burt smiled. "Yep. They are the surprises! Was it worth the wait?" he said, and walked toward the back of the trailer.

Robin, Risa, and Lucas got out and hugged Pearl. "Great for you, huh?"

"You bet! Wow, Uncle Burt, which one is mine?"

"Hold on, Princess. Let us let them out first, so you can meet them. Step back and don't make any sudden moves. This is a new place for them, and we want them to feel comfortable as we introduce them to everyone."

"And to Vivace," Pearl said.

“Keep Vivace in the house right now. One thing at a time,” Burt said.

The other man got out and he and Burt opened the back of the horse trailer. The man spoke soothingly, and led the first animal out, a tall, fine black horse.

*It's not a Lipizzan, she thought, but wow!*

“This is King,” said the man.

He stroked the horse's neck and said, “He is a quarter horse—very calm, very excellent to ride. You will enjoy him. And I am Ricardo, Risa's brother.”

“Wow!” said Pearl. “He's gorgeous! And big! Can I pet him?”

“Of course.” He loosened the reins to give King more slack.

“Here, give him this first,” said Burt, handing her the bag. “And don't worry, Sweetie. I'll teach you, and you'll be able to ride him by yourself.”

Pearl smiled. *Riding lessons—check! One more done on my Vision List!*

Burt looked back toward the house, and saw Pearl's mother and Robert waving. He chuckled. “I think

Charlotte has figured out that it's better to keep Rob in for a bit," he said. "God is good!"

*Thank You, LORD!* thought Pearl.

She opened the bag and saw sugar cubes and apples. "Oh yes," said Pearl, grabbing a big red one. She held it up to the horse. "Here you go, King."

King sniffed the apple and took it delicately. He ate it in one loud munch, then put his head close to her.

She heard Splash and Aurora whinny. "They probably want some apples, too. Do you have more for them?"

"Yes, later," he said. "But we're getting to know our new ones first. And we will put our new horses in a different section of the pasture. They can get to know Splash and Aurora over the fence."

King put his head toward her and nosed the bag. "I guess he wants another one," Pearl said.

"Give him a couple sugar cubes now," Risa said. "Hold your palm flat and let him use his lips."

"He won't bite," said Ricardo. "He's a good horse. Very smart."

Pearl nodded and did what he said. She raised her hand to King, and he carefully picked up the cubes. His teeth did not touch her.

She laughed. “It tickles!” she said.

Splash and Aurora whinnied again, and started running the fence.

“They are a bit jealous,” Burt said. He took the bag and gave it to Lucas. “Son, please go give them a treat and pet them a bit, and we’ll continue. Thanks!”

Now there were four horses—one for her, Robin, Lucas, and Robert. They wouldn’t have to share, and maybe they could all go on trail rides together soon!

## Chapter Fifteen — Double Delight!

They heard the other horse whinny. It moved around and stamped its foot, rocking the trailer a bit.

“When can we see it?” Pearl asked.

“One at a time,” Ricardo said. “She’ll wait. You need to get to know King better first.”

“Now that you’ve greeted him with gifts, breathe into his nostrils,” Burt said. “Remember?”

“This feels weird, but okay,” said Pearl. “I guess this is horsey ‘how-ya-doin’, right?”

Even though she was tall for her age, Pearl had to stretch to reach King’s nose. She took a deep breath and blew slowly and softly into his nostrils.

He blew back gently at her. Then he bounced his head up and down a bit, as if approving.

*This is so cool Daddy God!* thought Pearl. *I’m speaking horse! You know horse language, of course —You created them!—but I’m having fun learning!*

“Now scratch his neck and pet him,” said Ricardo.

She did, and King stepped toward her.

“Watch those hooves,” said her uncle. “No matter how sweet a horse is, their weight can break your foot if they step on you wrong!”

“Gotcha,” she said. “Can I ride him now?”

“No, you have another horse to meet!” Ricardo said, and smiled big. He looked at Risa and winked.

“While you guys do that, I’m going to put King in the other section of pasture,” said Burt. Ricardo handed him the reins, and King followed Burt obediently.

Pearl was surprised. “Does he know you already?”

“Yes, we met a couple years ago, and he’s even let me ride him,” he said. Even though King’s head was up, Burt was tall enough to reach his ears. “He is an excellent horse, as Ricardo said.”

They headed toward the pasture, and Splash and Aurora stopped running and whinnied again, then ran to the fence to get a good look at King.

“Horses are so funny!” said Risa.

“Yes, but neat,” said Robin. “Pearl, you’re gonna like this surprise even more!” she said, and giggled.

“Cool,” said Pearl. “I like all his surprises.”

“But this one is very special,” said Lucas.

Pearl was excited. “What’s her name?”

“Surprise!” said Robin.

“I know, but what’s her name?” said Pearl.

Ricardo was talking to the horse, and it seemed he was having a bit of trouble.

Risa grabbed the bag of apples and handed one to Ricardo for the horse. Pearl heard the crunch of apple as the horse enjoyed it.

“There now, Doll, you ready?” said Ricardo in a soothing voice. “Time to come out, okay?”

He looked back at the group. “No sudden moves, okay? She has had a long ride, especially with us having to stop and change the tire and such.”

Pearl held her breath. Ricardo held the horse’s reins loosely and spoke in low tones to her as he led her out. “Come now, little one,” he said. “You can do it.”

He led the mare out step by step.

She was a Welsh pony, quite a bit bigger than a Shetland, but smaller than a horse like King. She was painted black and white, and had big blue eyes, with long black eyelashes.

“She’s so beautiful!” Pearl said. “And she has blue eyes! Most horses have brown eyes, don’t they?”  
*She’s not a Lipizzan, either, but I already love her!*

As Pearl kept looking, she noticed the horse was very big in the middle. “She’s been eating good!” she said, trying to be polite. *I am sure she’s a great horse*, Pearl thought, *and a P.O.W.E.R. Princess knows it’s not about how something looks.*

The horse just blinked at Pearl with her big dark blue eyes, as they got adjusted to the bright sunshine.

Everyone laughed. “That’s right, Pearl,” said Lucas “And she’s not fat—she has a surprise inside!”

“A surprise? What’s her name?”

“Surprise—that’s her name!” he said, and chuckled with the others.

“I tried to tell you!” said Robin, poking Pearl in the ribs and smiling big. “It’s *sorpresa* in Spanish!”

Burt, walking back from the pasture, raised his voice so they could hear him better. “I bought her from Ricardo even before we knew she had a surprise inside,” Burt said. “So now her name fits perfectly!”

“Surprise *inside*?” Pearl was puzzled, then she understood. “Oh wait!” she said, even more excited now. “You mean she’s going to have a *baby*?”

“You got it!” said Burt. “So you get two surprises instead of just one!”

“Double portion!” said Risa. “God is so good! And He has a great sense of humor!”

“Yes!” Ricardo said, smiling big as well. “*Dios is bueno, para siempre!* ‘God is good, forever!’”

“Amen!” said Pearl. “And she’s mine?”

Burt nodded. “Yes,” he said. “Both of them!”

“Oh Wow, Uncle Burt! This is so great! Wow, thank you thank you thank you! But you’ll have to teach me what to do—“

“Calm down a little, okay?” said Ricardo kindly. “This little lady needs to get used to you first. King has traveled before, but this is the first trip for Surprise. She was born on my property.”

“Oh yes, sorry!” She looked around for the bag. “Any apples and sugar left?”

“Yes, here,” Risa said, and handed her the bag. Pearl pulled out a big pink apple and some sugar cubes and walked up slowly to her lovely pony. She held out both her hands, palms flat, one holding the apple, and the other covered in sugar cubes.

Surprise whickered a bit, and looked at one hand and then the other, as if trying to decide which to eat first. Finally, she put her lips over the sugar cubes and instantly, they were gone. She crunched them, then came back and sniffed the apple, then grabbed it with her teeth, quickly, as if she were hungry.

“She’s eating for two,” Risa said. “I remember how hungry that can make a mommy!”

Pearl watched her eat the apple, and then Surprise looked at Pearl, as if wanting more.

“Now, remember what you do next?” Burt said.  
“Yes, say ‘hello’ in horse,” Pearl replied.

She stepped slowly toward Surprise, and noticed that they were about the same height. Surprise’s gaze met hers and Pearl whispered, “Hello, Surprise, I’m Pearl,” then she blew gently into the horse’s nostrils.

Surprise whickered gently, then blew back into Pearl's face.

"Good job," said Risa quietly.

Pearl stretched out her hand slowly and scratched Surprise's neck, then petted and smoothed her mane, moving closer to her. "We're going to have so much fun together," Pearl said. "Trail rides and—"

"What is it?" Burt asked.

"Well, I can't take her on trail rides, huh?"

"Never fear, Dear," said Burt. "Surprise definitely will not be going on any trail rides till after the baby is born, and then we'll see. She will want to be with her little one, of course! But you can ride Splash or Aurora or King, okay?"

"Great!" Pearl said.

"And you can get to know Surprise and her baby in the meantime."

"Now what do I do?" said Pearl.

"Well, Ricardo and I are going to take Surprise to the pasture with King, and let her get used to it. We're also going to throw up a cover for them with the wood panels he brought, in case it rains, till we can

get the barn partitioned and expanded—which is one thing you kiddos can help me with tomorrow.”

She looked toward the house. “I bet Robert is so jealous—is he going to get to see the horses?”

“Yes, in a bit,” he replied. “I only want him to be able to see them from a distance or just pet their noses through the fence for a couple of days.”

*Good, thought Pearl. He’s too young for them anyway. Besides, he might be mean.*

Then she felt bad for thinking that. “Sorry, God,” she said under her breath. “It’s just that Robert is really rough on stuff, and I don’t want our horses hurt!”

“What, Pearl?” asked her uncle.

“Nothing,” said Pearl. “I’m just excited.”

“And thankful, right?” said Burt.

“Yes Sir!” she replied. “Thanks for everything!”

She ran in the house to tell Robert and her mother all about the horses.

*Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart, she heard the Holy Spirit whisper.*

She looked up to Heaven and said out loud. “Yes, Sir! “I love being a **P.O.W.E.R. Princess**, and I can’t wait to see what You are going to do next!”

*The End*

Hey kids! In *P.O.W.E.R. Girl!* Book Two, you’ll find ***Birthdays Blasts, Trail Rides and Helping Harps***, where Pearl turns 12, Surprise has her baby, and Pearl gets to help Uncle Burt solve a mystery and learn to play a harp to bless less fortunate kids.

There are at least seven more ***P.O.W.E.R. Girl!*** books in **The Adventures of Princess Pearl** series!

Please pray for Tonja to get these done quickly, so you can enjoy them and so other girls can learn how to have a great relationship with King Jesus!  
Thank you!

*On the following pages are other books she has written, and the Glossary and Resources for you!*

Other children's books by Tonja K. Taylor include:

*The 7 Ps of Prince and Princesshood*

*P.O.W.E.R. Praise—Create Your Own  
Flags, Banners, and Garments for the King*

*Jesus's Christmas Tree (for Missing  
Children)*

*My Brother the King*

*The King's Horse*

*The Butterfly and the Mimosa*

Books for teens and grown-ups include:

***Soul Dance: The Art of the Worship of God  
Delightful Health***

***The Properties of Light (a novel)***

***The Righteous Bride***

***The Rights of the Righteous***

***Tonja also does P.O.W.E.R. Dance classes and  
birthday parties!*** Learn Praise and Worship  
dance, with American Sign Language, These can  
be combined with "Covenant Craft Classes,"  
where you learn to make your own flags, banners,

streamers, and garments to celebrate the LORD and life! **Tonja can also perform her original music, and teach you to sing P.O.W.E.R. Princess songs!**

To order books and music, or to set up a party or presentation, contact Tonja at:  
**snowwaterspublishing@gmail.com**

or contact her for presentations at:

**www.womenspeakers.com/united-states/  
texarkana/speaker/tonja-taylor**

You may also visit her website and shop for books and gifts at:  
**www.CovenantCulture.com**

*Glossary and Resources on next page!*

## **Glossary and Resources**

***The Royal Book*** — the Holy Bible, infallible, eternal, unchanging, and totally inspired by the Spirit of God, through many men, through many years; the life of Jesus Who is the Living Word (John 1:1); the true Standard by which we build and guide our lives.

***Princess of P.O.W.E.R.*** - A royal heir of the Most High God; one who has accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and LORD, and who has, through trusting in what His blood did for her at the cross to forgive all her wrongs, has become a Princess of Purposeful Operations With Eternal Rewards.

***G.O.D.—Global Operations Dominion*** The Father in Heaven, Who is God, has absolute sovereign power, and it is His Word that upholds this world

***Vivace*** Italian in origin. Pronunciation: Vih VAH chee. <http://www.wordcentral.com> says the definition is: “in a brisk spirited manner -- used as a direction in music.”

***light and rainbows*** Real rainbows are made by God the Creator. The LORD first used this symbol for Noah, as a symbol of Covenant—an eternal, unchanging agreement, a totally dependable Promise—that He would never again wash evil from the earth by a flood of water.

**“12 God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive**

**generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth (Genesis 9:12-13, NASB)."**

Rainbows can only be seen when light shoots through water drops, revealing the spectrum, the range of many colors that are truly in the light but only seen when the light and water (both symbols of the Holy Spirit) come together just right.

Check out this website for more truths about God and rainbows. (The rainbow belongs to God's people!)  
**<http://christianity.about.com/od/symbolspictures/ig/Christian-Symbols-Glossary/Christian-Rainbow.htm>**

*the hills of Arkansas* Mostly in Northwest or North central.

***Jesus—My Best Invisible Friend Forever!* John 14:16 and 17: 16 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever— 17 The Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive (welcome, take to its heart), because it does not see Him or know and recognize Him. But you know and recognize Him, for He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you."**

***The God of P.O.W.E.R.!* (Purposeful Operations With Eternal Rewards) Revelation 11:17 (AMPC) says: "Exclaiming, To You we give thanks, Lord God Omnipotent, [the One] Who is and [ever] was, for assuming the high sovereignty and the great power that are Yours and for beginning to reign."**

*la casita de arbol.* Spanish for "little house of the tree."

***Nehemiah 2:20, "The God of Heaven will give us success."* (NASB) Nehemiah, led a large group of people to rebuild Jerusalem and this is what he confidently told the enemy, who were trying to stop the building project.**

**Psalm 37:4 (AMPC), “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart.”** When we love God and put Him first, He causes our wants to line up with His, and gives us what deeply satisfies our hearts!

***one of Your beautiful white horses that You have up there***, like the one You’ll come back on...like a **Lipizzans...**” Jesus the King of kings will return on what surely is the most magnificent white horse ever created, as Revelation 19:11 (AMPC) states: **“After that I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse [appeared]! The One Who was riding it is called Faithful (Trustworthy, Loyal, Incorruptible, Steady) and True, and He passes judgment and wages war in righteousness (holiness, justice, and uprightness).”**

“Lipizzan horses represent over 400 years of select breeding for beauty, nobility, and a rare combination of courage, strength, ability, temperament, and intelligence.” [www.lipizzan.org](http://www.lipizzan.org)

**Queen Mother** (Wikipedia) “(Britain) The title 'queen mother' evolved to distinguish a queen dowager from all other queens when she is also the mother of the reigning sovereign.” Princess Pearl learned this fact in homeschool and, since her mother is now a widow and Princess Pearl knows she is a royal princess in the Family of God, she likes to use this term for her mom.

**Italian cream cake** Pearl’s favorite!  
[www.bakedecoratecelebrate.com](http://www.bakedecoratecelebrate.com)

**How to fold the napkins** There are many interesting sites on how to fold napkins. This is a fun one:  
[www.buzzfeed.com/peggy/28-creative-napkin-folding-techniques-for-every-oc#.mv8118gGD](http://www.buzzfeed.com/peggy/28-creative-napkin-folding-techniques-for-every-oc#.mv8118gGD)

***We need to check with Daddy God first*** As Proverbs 4:7 (AMPC) says: **“The beginning of Wisdom is: get Wisdom (skillful and godly Wisdom)! [For skillful and godly Wisdom is the principal thing.] And with all you have gotten, get understanding (discernment, comprehension, and interpretation).”**

James 1:5 (AMPC) says: **“If any of you is deficient in wisdom, let him ask of [a]the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally and ungrudgingly, without reproaching or faultfinding, and it will be given him.”**  
***super-duper potatoes***

Here’s a recipe to try: [www.americanfood.about.com/od/potatosidedishrecipes/r/](http://www.americanfood.about.com/od/potatosidedishrecipes/r/Loaded_Mashed_Potato_Bake2.htm)

[Loaded\\_Mashed\\_Potato\\_Bake2.htm](http://www.americanfood.about.com/od/potatosidedishrecipes/r/Loaded_Mashed_Potato_Bake2.htm)

***kefir***. Fermented milk that is like liquid yogurt, full of excellent probiotics to help you be healthy. <http://www.culturesforhealth.com/learn/category/milk-kefir/>

***fresh pecans*** Pecans are delicious nuts that produced in the fall. <http://www.nutrition-and-you.com/pecans.html>

***A P.O.W.E.R. Princess watches her words and speaks kind things, like the Royal Book says.*** Like our Father God tells us in Ephesians 4:29 (AMPC), **“Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth, but only such [speech] as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need and the occasion, that it may be a blessing and give grace (God’s favor) to those who hear it.”**

***Jeremiah 29:11*** (AMPC) says, **“For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.”**

***Pearl of great price*** We are each a pearl of great price to Jesus!

**Matthew 13:45-46 (AMPC)** says, “Again the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a dealer in search of fine and [f] precious pearls, Who, on finding a single pearl of great price, went and sold all he had and bought it.”

*AWANA* is a global outreach to reach kids and equip leaders to reach the world for God by teaching them Scriptures, Bible stories, and leadership. [www.awana.org](http://www.awana.org)

[KLOVE.com](http://KLOVE.com) plays encouraging music 24/7 around the world.

***“You’re faithful, faithful; Father, You are faithful—we have put our trust in You...”*** lyrics from “We Praise Your Name” — lyrics by Trent Cory, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

***Elohim.*** In the traditional Jewish view, Elohim is the Name of God as the Creator and Judge of the universe (Gen 1:1-2:4a). [www.hebrew4christians.com/Names\\_of\\_G-d/Elohim/elohim.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Elohim/elohim.html)

***organic garden*** Grow gardens without using poison: [www.planetnatural.com/product-category/organic-gardening/gardening-with-kids/](http://www.planetnatural.com/product-category/organic-gardening/gardening-with-kids/)

***butterfly garden*** Grow butterflies from the babies, the caterpillars! Get the kits here: <http://www.insectlore.com/live-butterfly-garden-shipped-with-live-caterpillars-now>.

***tithe*** To give the LORD the first 10 percent of all money you earn from allowance, or gifts. This is the LORD’s, then you get to do what you want with the other 90%. See Malachi 3:10-12.

***give offerings*** This means you give money or service or prayers or praise or things after the tithe.

***homeschool*** A legal right of American citizens to educate their children at home, in place of them going to a public school or another private school. [www.sonlight.com/before-you-start-homeschooling/](http://www.sonlight.com/before-you-start-homeschooling/)

***Buffalo River*** The upper Buffalo, where Ponca is located, offers the river's---and Arkansas'---finest scenic beauty. With its massive towering bluffs, countless waterfalls, watchable wildlife, ties to both historic and prehistoric cultures, and remote unspoiled location, the upper Buffalo River wilderness is surely mid-America's finest outdoor destination. [www.buffaloriver.com](http://www.buffaloriver.com)  
Arkansas Children's Hospital is a pediatric hospital located in Little Rock, Arkansas. It is among the largest in the United States, serving children from birth to age 21.  
(Wikipedia) [www.archildrens.org/](http://www.archildrens.org/)

***Hallelujah Harvest Hayride and Festival the Saturday before October 31*** Princess Pearl and her family help their local church put on this fun festival of hayrides, wholesome games, food, music, and fellowship, that glorify God.

***Jesus is the Good Shepherd; He is the Prince of Peace***  
John 10:14, 15 (NASB) **“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. Isaiah 9:6 (NASB), “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”**

***petition*** 2. a request made for something desired, especially a respectful or humble request, as to a superior or to one of those in authority; a supplication or prayer: (a petition for aid; a petition to God for courage and strength.) [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

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*the sweet Holy Spirit of God* The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, Who is God. As John 14:26 (AMPC) says, **“But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.”**

**The Spanish Riding School** 430 years of riders doing amazing feats on Lipizzaner horses [www.wien.info/en/sightseeing/sights/imperial/spanish-riding-school](http://www.wien.info/en/sightseeing/sights/imperial/spanish-riding-school)

*I AM the Living Water* Jesus is the One Who gives us life and refreshing, Who satisfies our thirst that only He can quench. John 7:37-39 in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) says: 37 **“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”**

*Watch for Book Two to be out soon!*

Share your comments and suggestions with  
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