

Star of Light

Part 2

Chapter 12 Jenny

Many, many miles away, there was a different Christmas party taking place. The children here were also feeling very happy and carefree, like the ones in the nurse's home.

But it was a quite different kind of party. Instead of oranges and nuts and sweets, there were jellies and trifles and chocolate biscuits, and a big Christmas cake. Instead of black, wet rags there were brightly colored dresses and sweaters, and the girls had bright ribbons in their hair. It should have been a perfect party, and yet when the tea and games were over, and the joyful children gathered by the Christmas tree to sing carols, the grown-up visitors all felt sad, and one small visitor, aged nine, felt saddest of all.

For this was a blind school, and the little singers with their bright faces could not see the tree or the candles or the toys they had been given. They had eaten their meal excitedly and danced merrily up and down to the sound of music, and now they were singing with all their hearts. Jenny, sitting in the audience with her parents, felt very sad. If she always had to live in the dark, she was quite certain she would never be happy again. She shut her eyes for a moment and tried to imagine what it would be like to be blind, but it was really too dreadful even to think about, so she opened them again quickly and watched the children.

They were singing a carol that Jenny herself had learned at school:

“Star of wonder, star of light,

Star with royal beauty bright,

Westward leading, still proceeding,

Guide us to thy perfect Light.”

Jenny wondered why they had been taught such words. What was the good of singing about perfect light when they were doomed to spend all their days in darkness? Yet, as she watched them, she had to admit to herself that not one little singer looked unhappy.

Jenny knew the story of that carol, for they had made a beautiful wall picture of it to decorate the classroom for their Christmas party. Their teacher had stuck on the brightly colored figures—three lurching camels; three wise men with long white beards and their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; a shining star beaming down on a humble little house where a poor woman sat playing with her baby boy.

Jenny's mother touched her, and she stopped dreaming and started clapping very loudly so that the blind children would hear how pleased she was. And then it was over, and the children crowded around to say good-bye, touching and feeling and chattering, and the smallest ones were carried away happy and sleepy to bed. But the bigger ones stayed around the doorway to wave and shout to the sound of cars driving away, and that was the last Jenny saw of them.

She was very quiet on the way home and her mother, thinking she was tired, hurried her up to her room, lit her gas fire, and hustled her into bed. Jenny had been ill, and this had been her first real outing in three months. Her mother had wondered whether she ought to go, but Jenny

had insisted, and as usual had her way. Her father had recently joined the council of the blind school, and they had all been invited to the Christmas party.

Jenny nestled down under her pink comforter and looked at all her Christmas presents—the books, the games, the cozy new dressing gown, the little gold wristwatch, and the travelling case. It had been a good Christmas, and the best present of all—a pony of her own—was down in the stable. For the first time in her rather self-centered life, Jenny suddenly realized that she was really a very fortunate child. She thought of the blind children with the toys they could not see, and the children in Morocco who had no toys at all and often no food. Her Aunt Rosemary looked after some of them, and had written her an early Christmas letter all about them, and Jenny had been thrilled. It had been like a new, exciting story, giving her a peep into a world she knew nothing about, a world where children like herself went about in rags and earned their own living and slept by themselves out-of-doors—a world where little babies got ill because they didn't have enough to eat. Jenny adored babies, but the only ones she had ever met had nannies who took care of them, and she had not been allowed to hold them in her arms as she had longed to do. These other babies were probably too poor to have nannies, and perhaps she would be allowed to pick them up.

The wonderful thing was that in a very short time Jenny would actually see the children that Aunt Rosemary had written about. Only six weeks after Christmas, she and her parents were going by car on a long journey to visit her and her beggar children in the mountains of North Africa.

The doctor had said that Jenny needed sunshine. She had had plenty of medicines, creams, tonics, and drives out in the car, but she could not get warm sunshine in England in January, so they were going southward to a

land of blue skies and yellow beaches and calm seas where she would grow strong and brown and healthy.

She sleepily wondered how her father would know the way, and supposed they would just follow the sun, as the wise men had followed the star. When her mother returned with a drink and biscuits on a tray, she found her little daughter fast asleep. She stood looking down on the flushed face and tumbled hair for a moment, then put out the light, opened the big window, and slipped away, leaving Jenny to dream of stars, sunshine, and Christmas trees.

Chapter 13 The Holiday Begins

Very early one morning in March, the English nurse woke, got out of bed at once, and ran up to her flat roof to look at the weather. It was going to be a fine day, she decided happily, and this was just as it should be, for this was the day she had looked forward to for so long. Her cousin from England was arriving to stay in the hotel for two weeks. Her husband was coming with her, and they were bringing Jenny.

It was the thought of Jenny that made the English nurse very happy. She woke Kinza, who was lying in a ball on a mattress on the floor, her ginger kitten close beside her. The first thing she always did on waking was to stretch out her hand and make sure that the kitten was there, and if it had gone for a walk she made a terrible fuss. But this morning all was well.

Hand in hand, the English nurse and Kinza climbed the stairs onto the flat roof and sat down at a low round table, eating breakfast together under a blue spring sky.

“The little girl is coming today,” announced the nurse, as she tidied up and tried not to trip over Kinza and the kitten, who were playing on the

floor with a ball. "We are going to take a holiday. We will go to the market together and buy nice things to eat, and then we'll make a feast for the little girl."

"A feast! A feast!" shouted Kinza, jumping about like a clumsy goat kid, and falling over the wastepaper basket. "I will carry the basket for you. Let's go now."

"Yes, let's," said the nurse, and off they went into the sunshine hand in hand. The nurse had not had a weekday holiday for a long time. She usually stayed inside in the morning. But today she had told the people not to come. She was going to be free to get ready for Jenny. Now, while it was still early, she was going to climb up the hillside behind the town and pick flowers.

It was too far for Kinza, so when they had finished their shopping, she left her on the step of the doughnut shop in the charge of Hamid. She often did this when she was busy, for she felt quite sure that the two children were probably brother and sister and should spend some time together. Kinza was always perfectly safe and happy when Hamid looked after her, although she sometimes ended up rather greasy and not very keen on her dinner. She was very fond of doughnuts and would eat all that were offered her.

Once by herself, the nurse almost ran up the steep, cobbled streets, past the tumbledown shacks on the outskirts of the town, and out through the gate in the ruined wall that led on to the hillside. She suddenly forgot that she would soon be middle-aged and felt very young indeed. She began picking the flowers that were growing all around her.

How beautiful they are! she thought. I shall bring Jenny up here and we'll pick them together.

As she thought of Jenny, she began to wonder how they would all get on together. Their lives were so different. Once, when they had been growing up together, she and Elizabeth had been like sisters, but Elizabeth had married a rich man and had gone to live in his beautiful home. Jenny had been brought up surrounded by beauty and peace, and had had everything that love and money could give. Aunt Rosemary could have made her home with them, too, but while she was training to be a nurse she had felt that God wanted her to go to Africa to help people and to care for poor, ragged children. Elizabeth and her husband thought it was a foolish thing to do, and Aunt Rosemary had found it difficult to write and tell them about her life.

Their letters had mainly been about Jenny, and every Christmas Elizabeth had sent Rosemary a photograph of her as she grew up, and Rosemary had kept them all in a little photo album. The last picture had been of Jenny on her pony. Rosemary wondered how Jenny would feel about the simple toys the Moorish children enjoyed. She was used to expensive dolls and proper beds and riding her pony about her father's estate. She would probably get very bored. Feeling rather sad, Rosemary hurried back down the mountain with her flowers, collected a happy, sticky Kinza, and went home.

She went to the toy cupboard and inspected it rather sadly. There were some shabby scrapbooks, faded puzzles, and chipped bricks, some scruffy little dolls, and a box of stubby chalk. They had all obviously been enjoyed by children who had never seen toys before, and all the toys were well-worn. Rosemary shut the cupboard with a sigh and went to the kitchen to make buns.

By half-past four the little house was as bright as scrubbing and polishing could make it, and the sitting room was sweet with the scent of

wildflowers. Tea was ready, the kettle was singing on the stove, and Rosemary and Kinza set out to meet the car in front of the hotel.

It arrived punctually, a smart, streamlined vehicle, and the little boys surged around, fighting each other in their efforts to carry the luggage. Rosemary stood waiting for her relatives to get out, and above the pandemonium she heard a child's voice cry out, "Oh, Mummy, look! What a sweet little girl! You never told me Aunt Rosemary had a little girl."

The moment they extricated themselves from the mob of little boys, Elizabeth, looking just as young as she had looked ten years before, was kissing her cousin warmly. Jenny was squatting on the ground, trying to make friends with Kinza.

"Jenny," said her mother sharply, "you haven't greeted Aunt Rosemary."

Jenny got up, kissed her aunt politely, and turned back to Kinza. While the adults sorted out the luggage, passports, and forms, Rosemary stood quietly watching the child whom for years she had longed to see. An elfin-looking child, she thought, and went over to make friends.

Jenny turned a troubled face to her aunt. "What is the matter with this little girl?" she asked. "I showed her my pretty brooch, and she just stared in front of her."

"I'm afraid she's blind, Jenny," said Rosemary gently. "But it doesn't mean you can't play with her. You must give her toys she can feel, and you must sing to her and let her touch you. She'll soon love you."

Rosemary lifted Kinza's tiny hand and passed it lightly over Jenny's face and hair. "That's how she gets to know people," she explained, and then turned to speak to Jenny's mother and father. But before she could say

anything, Jenny had seized her mother's hand and was looking up at her, her grey eyes brimming with tears.

"She's blind, Mummy," she whispered, "like the little Christmas children."

"Never mind," replied Mrs. Swift gently. "She looks like a very happy little girl, and we must find her a little present. Now, let's come and see Aunt Rosemary's house."

They set off across the market, the grown-ups walking ahead and Jenny leading Kinza, too interested in her new playmate to notice much of the town about her. She was happier than she had been all the holiday for, much as she loved her mother and father, she was only nine, and she longed for other children to play with. Most of all she longed for something to look after. She was too old for dolls, her pets had all been left at home, and she missed them dreadfully. But a curly-haired blind baby of three was far better than pets. She had never dreamed of anything so exciting.

They had reached the narrow backstreet where Rosemary lived, and Mrs. Swift was talking in a rather strained voice and trying not to look too horrified at the babies sitting on the cobbles and the ragged old beggar chanting in one of the doorways. Then she suddenly looked very horrified indeed, for Rosemary had stopped in front of the last house and was taking out her key. On the doorstep sat a very poor woman, holding something to her breast under her rags.

Rosemary spoke to the woman, who pulled aside her rags and held out a baby, all skin and bones, half-dead with sickness and exhaustion. Mrs. Swift put out her hand to take hold of Jenny, but she was too late. Her child had stepped forward, and both she and Rosemary were stooping over the pathetic little creature, quite absorbed.

“Jenny!” commanded her mother. “Come here!” But Jenny took not the slightest notice. She turned tragic eyes to her aunt.

“Is it going to die?” she whispered.

“I don’t know; I hope not,” replied Rosemary. “Let’s go in.”

She opened the front door, led the woman into the room where she gave out the medicines, and told her to sit down while she turned back to her guests. Mrs. Swift was standing very still, recovering from her shock at finding such a wretched creature on Rosemary’s doorstep. She noticed that the young mother had a patient face, one used to suffering, with beautiful dark eyes that gleamed with hope as she lifted her baby toward the nurse.

“Rosemary,” she urged, “don’t worry about us; we can look after ourselves. You go and see to that poor baby.”

Rosemary hesitated. “Well, come upstairs,” she said, “and I can show you where the sitting room is. Tea is all ready, and the kettle is boiling.”

It was a surprise to enter a house on that dingy street and find it bright with pictures and flowers, and a delicious meal set out on pretty china. Rosemary sat them down on the low mattress seats and made tea. Then she spoke rather shyly.

“It seems awfully rude,” she said, “but would you mind if I left you just for ten minutes? You see, I know this woman. She’s lost four babies—this one is all she’s got.”

Jenny slipped her hand into her aunt’s. “I’m going to help you,” she announced.

“No, Jenny,” exclaimed her mother firmly. “It’s quite out of the question. Come and sit down and drink your tea.”

Jenny flew into a passion at once.

“I want to go!” she stormed. “I want to see that baby get well. I don’t want any tea! Say I can come, Aunt Rosemary—it’s your house. Daddy, say I can go. Mummy, you might let me—”

Her father most unexpectedly came to Jenny’s rescue. “What is the matter with that baby?” he asked. “Has it got anything infectious?”

“I shouldn’t think so,” answered Rosemary. “I’ve seen it before. She’s suffering from starvation and improper feeding.”

“Then, Elizabeth, I would let her go, if Rosemary doesn’t mind,” said Mr. Swift. As Jenny left the room triumphantly with Rosemary, he turned to his wife. “Darling,” he said, “let her help all she can. She needs to help someone. It may make her a little less selfish to see that sort of thing, and I’m sure Rosemary will be sensible about infection.”

“Perhaps so,” agreed Jenny’s mother, and she gave a little sigh. “If only she could have had younger brothers and sisters,” she added wistfully.

Meanwhile, Jenny and her aunt were bending over the white-faced baby, and the mother was telling the usual tale of poverty, ignorance, and improper feeding. It seemed almost too late to help, but perhaps there was still a chance. Rosemary, nursing the tiny thing in a blanket, turned to Jenny.

“Go upstairs, Jenny,” she said, “and bring me a cup and a spoon and some sugar from the shelf above the stove.”

Jenny obeyed, moving swiftly and lightly.

“Now go and fetch the kettle,” commanded her aunt.

Jenny was off in a flash.

“Now bring me those white tablets on the third shelf over there,” her aunt went on, speaking very gravely, and Jenny had the uncomfortable feeling that her aunt disapproved of her.

“Now please rinse out the cup and spoon with some of that boiled water. Crush up one tablet and mix it with a little water. Pass me that bottle.”

Jenny forgot her temper, forgot her aunt, and forgot herself. She knelt perfectly still on the mat, only conscious of the weak gurgling sound as the baby tried to swallow. Almost drop by drop the medicine disappeared and the baby was not sick. After a few more spoonfuls of sweetened water, Rosemary began talking to the mother in Arabic, explaining that she must sit quietly for an hour and then they would give the child another drink.

“It must get better,” muttered Jenny to herself. “It must! It must!”

And then Rosemary did something that surprised Jenny. She pointed to the picture on the wall of Jesus holding a child in His arms, and told the woman all about it. Then she prayed aloud for the sick little baby. Jenny could not understand what her aunt was saying, but she knew she was praying.

I wonder if that really does any good, thought Jenny, and she, too, glanced up at the painting on the wall. Somehow the sight of the child in the picture being held so closely made the real baby seem safer.

“It’s sure to get better,” breathed Jenny to herself, bending over it again. And as she watched, the weak eyelids fluttered, and the baby opened her eyes.

Chapter 14 A Light Begins to Shine

They didn’t need to make any further plans, for Jenny announced firmly that they were going to stay in the town until it was time to go home to England, and she was going to be Kinza’s nurse and help Aunt Rosemary every day with the sick babies in the clinic.

Mr. Swift laughed comfortably and then wondered what he was going to do with himself in a remote mountain village for two weeks. Mrs. Swift sighed anxiously and insisted that Jenny should gargle three times a day. Jenny herself was openly thrilled, and Rosemary was secretly very happy. She felt the holiday was going to be a complete success.

It was Sunday afternoon, and on Sunday no one came to the clinic. There had been a meeting for women in the afternoon, and Jenny watched them leaving, walking slowly down the street with their babies tied tightly on their backs under the white outer garments that covered them from head to toe.

“They look like camels with humps, carrying their babies like that,” remarked Jenny. “You’d think their babies would be suffocated, wouldn’t you? Why don’t they have baby carriers like ordinary people?”

“They couldn’t afford to buy them,” replied Rosemary, smiling. “But it certainly isn’t a very good way to carry them. A lot of babies grow up with weak lungs through lack of fresh air. You’ve noticed how pale some of them look.”

“And spotty and thin and dirty,” added Jenny, wrinkling her small nose. “It’s a pity there aren’t more people like you to teach them how to look after their babies properly. You know, Auntie, I’ve been thinking. I’ve decided that when I grow up I’m going to be a missionary too. I’m going

to come out here and have a clinic and make all the sick people better like you do. I think it's such fun."

Rosemary looked down into Jenny's brown, confident face, and she didn't answer for a moment or two.

"You couldn't be a missionary unless something very important happened to you first, Jenny," she said at last.

"Why not, Auntie?" inquired Jenny, surprised. "I could learn to be a nurse and how to look after babies. I wouldn't need to know anything else, would I?"

"Yes, I think you would," replied Rosemary with a smile, "but I'm not going to tell you here in the passage. Let's take a picnic tea to the Tower Gardens, and then we can talk about it. Kinza will be awake by now, and she loves the Tower Gardens."

"Ooh, lovely!" cried Jenny, and pranced up the stairs two at a time to get things ready. "Mummy said I could stay to tea if you invited me. I specially asked her."

"Did you now?" said Rosemary, laughing. "Would you like to get Kinza ready while I get the picnic? Then we can go."

Ten minutes later Rosemary, Jenny, and Kinza were climbing the steps to the Tower Gardens. They were so beautiful that the little group stood still for a moment, gazing at everything silently.

"Don't let Kinza fall in the pond," warned Rosemary. "You just hang on to her while I spread out the tea."

She unpacked the basket and then sat for a few moments quietly watching the two children at play. Kinza was growing into a beautiful little girl now, strong and sturdy. Who was she, and what would become of

her? It's time some practical plan is made about her future, thought Rosemary, if she is to grow up useful and clever with her hands. And Jenny—was she going to grow up careless and selfish? Rosemary hoped not.

Jenny caught sight of the picnic laid out and, taking Kinza's hand in hers, came running up. Kinza was given a bun, and Jenny helped herself to a sandwich and turned a questioning face to her aunt.

"What else would I have to know to become a missionary?" she asked, as though the conversation had never left off.

"It depends on what you want to do," replied Rosemary steadily. "If you simply want to heal people's sickness, then you must train to be a nurse or a doctor. But most people here are so poor that they will probably get ill again very quickly, and in any case none of our bodies lasts very long. The part of people that really matters is the part that lasts forever, their real proper selves, which we call their spirits. You can really only help them and make them happy by leading them to the Lord Jesus, and you can't possibly do that unless you know Him yourself. So it isn't really what you know, but who you know."

"But you spend such a long time each day giving them medicine," said Jenny. "Why couldn't I just do that?"

"You could," said Rosemary, "but the reason I do it is not just to make them better. I give it because I want them to see that Jesus lives in me and He cares about their pain and wants to help them. You have got to show the love of Jesus by doing good things. He isn't on earth anymore, but His Spirit lives in the hearts of those who love and trust Him, and He works through them. So the first thing you have to be sure of is that Jesus

is actually there, loving through you. Otherwise it's just like taking an empty lantern out in the dark."

"Well, how do you know if He's there or not?" asked Jenny.

"How does the light get into the empty lantern?" asked Rosemary. "It's a matter of opening a door and placing a candle inside. Jesus is the Light, and He wants to come in. If the glass of the lantern is clean, the light shines out clearly, but if the glass is cloudy and dirty the light will be very dim. If we really want Him to, Jesus will make us clean and new inside, like clear glass, by helping us to stop being bad-tempered and impatient and disobedient. Then the light of Jesus' love will shine through, and people will be attracted to Him. He is the important part, not the lantern."

There was another pause.

"So I suppose only very good people can be missionaries?" Jenny said thoughtfully.

"It's not exactly that," said Rosemary. "Many people are very good and kind without Jesus, just like golden lanterns when you put them in the sun. But in the evening the sun sets. Our own goodness lasts only as long as we do—until we die. The love and life and goodness of Jesus last forever, and the people who have His light in them will last forever as well. It is called eternal life, and of course it's a far stronger sort of goodness than the other kind."

"There are Mummy and Daddy coming into the garden," exclaimed Jenny suddenly, and she jumped up and ran along the path toward them. She was rather glad to escape from this conversation, for Aunt Rosemary was saying some quite disturbing things, and Jenny did not really like being

disturbed. But whatever happened, Jenny knew she would always be by far the most important person in the world to her mother and father.

Rosemary followed, leading a rather dirty Kinza. She smiled at Elizabeth over Jenny's head—it was wonderful to see her running about and strong again. One of the best parts of the holiday for both women had been the renewing of their old friendship, which now felt as strong and sure as it had been before their very different ways of life had seemed to separate them.

Elizabeth had to admit that her cousin was not altogether wasting her time. The look on the face of the sick baby's mother had taught her that, and in spite of the germs and the sores at the clinic, she trusted Rosemary with Jenny as she had never trusted anyone before. And this was strange, for a few weeks ago she would have been horrified at her little girl having anything to do with poverty and illness.

There are different sorts of beauty, she thought. Healing and helping and loving and giving are beautiful. I want Jenny to grow up good and unselfish, and I think Rosemary can help her in that way.

When she spoke to her husband about it, he agreed. "She's learning something practical in that clinic," he said, "and she may find she'd make a good nurse."

"Rosemary," said Elizabeth, cuddling Kinza against her, "couldn't you desert your little ones just for once this evening, and come and have supper with us at the hotel?"

"They don't come on Sunday," replied Rosemary. "It's my day off, except for the afternoon meeting. I'd love to come."

“Oh, Mummy, look!” cried Jenny. “That peacock has spread open its tail.” And she hurried her parents off to see, while Rosemary and Kinza made their slow way home.

An hour later, Rosemary was sitting in the big hotel dining room, under a cut-glass chandelier, eating a four-course dinner with Jenny and her parents, who had all dressed up in their very best to welcome her. It was a great treat to Rosemary to come out to supper, and there was always so much to say when she and Elizabeth got together. Tonight the conversation turned to Kinza.

“She’s such a beautiful little creature,” said Elizabeth. “It seems so cruel that she should be blind. What are you going to do with her in the future, Rosemary?”

“I would like her to go to a training school in about three years’ time,” said Rosemary, “where she can learn Braille and basketwork. She could earn her own living like that out here, and when she was really good she could come back to me.”

Jenny leaned forward across the table, nearly upsetting her glass in her eagerness. “The blind school, Daddy,” she cried, “where they invited us at Christmas. If Kinza went there, Mummy, she could come and stay with us sometimes, and I’d look after her. It would be like having a little sister, and I’d see her lots and lots, and she’d be so happy if I was there. They had such a lovely time at Christmas. Oh, when can she come, Auntie Rosemary? Couldn’t we take her home with us this time?”

The cousins looked at each other questioningly.

“It’s not a bad idea of Jenny’s,” said Mrs. Swift. “It’s a very good school, and they take them quite young. John could easily get her in free. He’s on the board and has a lot of influence. The sooner she goes, the more

quickly she’ll learn English. Also, she could travel with us in the car instead of you having to bring her.”

Rosemary hesitated. She didn’t know what to answer. It was all so sudden. Jenny was jumping up and down in her chair in her excitement.

“Jenny gets tired of these long car drives,” added Mrs. Swift. “She’s always much happier if there’s another child in the car.”

“I don’t know what to say,” replied Rosemary. “It’s really very kind of you ... but somehow she seems too small to go away just yet. Could I think it over and give you an answer in a day or two?”

“Of course,” answered Mrs. Swift. “Just let us know when you feel sure. No, Jenny, don’t go on and on about it. People can’t make up their minds on important matters without a little think first, or they may make them up wrongly.”

“I’ve made mine up on this important matter,” announced Jenny dramatically. “Oh, Auntie Rosemary, I’m sure you’ll say yes. It really does seem to be the best idea I’ve had in my whole life. Even Mummy and Daddy think it’s good. Oh, look, Daddy, there is ice cream for pudding, the kind you don’t like. Please, will you pretend you’d like one, and I’ll eat it for you as well as mine.”

In her excitement at the possibility of getting extra ice cream, Jenny forgot about Kinza for the moment, and they talked about other things until Rosemary got up to go.

“John and I will take you home,” said Mrs. Swift, getting up. “Jenny, darling, run up to bed.”

“All right,” answered Jenny, who, having enjoyed extra ice cream, was in a good mood. She flung her arms around her aunt’s neck and pulled her

head down close to her mouth, so that no one could hear what they were saying.

“You are going to think hard about it, aren’t you, Auntie?” she whispered.

“Yes, Jenny, very hard. I’m going to ask God to show me the right way.”

“Do you think He’ll have shown you by tomorrow morning?”

“I don’t know, Jenny—it’s such a big thing. Give me two days.”

“Well, ask Him to show you as quickly as possible—and ask Him to let it be yes.”

“I don’t really know how to ... but I’ll try. Good night, Auntie Rosemary.”

“Good night, Jenny.”

She gently loosened the child’s clinging arms and set out across the dark marketplace with Mr. and Mrs. Swift. Under the streetlamp she turned to wave, and Jenny waved back, black against the bright background of the huge doorway.

Chapter 15 Jenny Learns a Hard Lesson

Hamid welcomed the coming of spring and the warmer weather. Winter is hard when your only clothes are rags. The clothes that the English nurse had given him had fallen to pieces, but this no longer mattered. Now the sun shone warm and comforting, the storks nested in the towers, flowers clothed the mountains, and cherry and peach blossoms made the valley beautiful. Baby goats skipped and jostled in the streets, and Hamid, like all other young things, had grown several inches and looked more like a scarecrow than ever. He sat on the step of the doughnut stall, licking the oil off his fingers and watching the seething market with bright, observant eyes.

There was always so much to see on market days, and amid all the busyness of people coming and going, Hamid saw Kinza in a scarlet jersey prancing along between Jenny and the English nurse who had come out to do her shopping.

Then in a flash he caught sight of something else. He thought he was dreaming for a second, and he rubbed his eyes and looked again. He was not dreaming. He went white under his tan, turned a backward somersault into the shop, and hid himself securely between the stone oven and the doughnut counter. Then he peeped out, like a startled rabbit from its hole, to watch what would happen next.

His stepfather stood rigid in a doorway across the aisle, staring fixedly at the little group who were buying oranges, unaware of him. Then, drawing a step or two nearer, he watched Kinza as a snake might watch a baby rabbit at play, awaiting its moment to strike. His keen eyes were taking in everything—the blind gestures, the happy freedom of her baby talk, the stout little shoes, and the warm clothes. As the three went over to the oil merchant’s shop he followed, coming so close to his stepdaughter that for one breathless moment Hamid wondered if he was going to snatch her. But he did not touch her. He merely moved behind them, unnoticed in the jostling crowd, and Hamid saw that his black eyes burned with anger and his mouth was closed as tightly as a steel trap.

Hamid, recovering from his first shock, was not afraid. His stepfather had come to the market on business and would probably leave the town that evening. He had not seen Hamid, nor would he see him, for at the earliest possible moment Hamid would run off into the mountains and keep company with the monkeys until after dark. He did not worry about Kinza at all—she was in the safekeeping of the English nurse, who loved her and would never let her go. Her home was a fortress that Si Mohamed could never enter.

Hamid's master arrived quite soon and was surprised and annoyed to find his assistant under the counter instead of behind it. He boxed his ears, which Hamid did not mind in the least, and took some money off his pay, which he minded quite a lot. Once released, his nimble brown feet crisscrossed the danger zone of the marketplace, where his stepfather lurked, and he made for the cobbled path that ran along the outskirts of the town.

Kinza, Jenny, and Rosemary made their way home and never noticed the sinister figure of the man who followed them as far as the entrance of the street and stood watching until the door of the house closed behind them. It was almost time for the clinic to open. Usually, while Aunt Rosemary worked there, Kinza sat on the front step in the sunshine and talked to her kitten, and the patients stepped over or around her. But during the past two weeks she had often gone to play with Jenny, who loved looking after her. So now, with her new storybook that she had brought to show her aunt in one hand, and Kinza holding on to the other, Jenny set off to find her mother and father at the hotel.

The little girls threaded their way through the market crowds and entered the Tower Gardens, which lay between them and the hotel. There was no one in the gardens, for everyone was busy in the market, and the sleepy silence made Jenny want to linger. She thought of her new book; she had just reached an exciting part, and this would be a lovely, quiet place to sit and read just for five minutes. Her mother had told her she was never to stop between her aunt's house and the hotel, but after all, her mother did not know what time she set out. She sat down in a pleasant little stone corner near the old archway, with Kinza beside her, and began to read her book.

It was a story about a child just like Jenny, who had a pony of her own and rode in horse contests, just as she was going to do when she got

home. She hardly noticed that Kinza had gotten up and started to wander along the path toward the archway. Kinza often went for little walks, her arms held out in front of her to avoid danger. When she felt she had gone far enough, she would stand still and squeak till someone fetched her back.

Jenny read on eagerly, for she wanted to reach the end of the chapter and discover whether Annabel's pony was going to win the cup for jumping or not. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Kinza standing in the archway. She must fetch her back in a minute.

She skimmed to the end and got up quickly with a sigh of relief, because Annabel had won easily. But she felt guilty for having let Kinza stray through the archway alone. "Kinza!" she called eagerly, running into the other part of the gardens, and then she stopped short and her eyes grew big with fright.

For the green grass in front of her was empty and deserted—there was no sign of Kinza anywhere.

With her heart beating wildly, she ran from bush to bush, searching behind every one; up and down the steps she flew, back into the walled garden, but it was no good. Kinza had completely disappeared.

Jenny rushed out into the market, half-blind with panic, bumping into people who turned to look at her anxiously, pushing her way in and out, searching frantically, with her pale, tear-stained cheeks and big, frightened eyes.

At last she stood still, completely out of breath, and because there was nowhere else to look, and because she did not like people staring at her, she went back to the garden and stood alone by the archway, trying to decide what to do next.

She simply could not go back. Aunt Rosemary had trusted her alone with Kinza, and she had failed completely in her trust. What would her aunt say? And worse still, where was Kinza? Had something terrible happened to her? Was she frightened or hurt and crying out, wondering why Jenny did not come to her? Jenny did not know. She burst into tears and ran sobbing to the hotel, up the stairs to her mother's room, and into her arms.

When Mrs. Swift finally managed to understand what had happened, she went rather white too. She dried Jenny's eyes and took her by the hand.

"We must go and tell Auntie Rosemary at once," she said quietly. "We'll have one more look in the marketplace on the way."

Jenny stood quite still. "I can't go to Aunt Rosemary," she said tragically, "I just can't, Mummy. You'll have to go and tell her."

"No," said Mrs. Swift, still quietly but very firmly, "you must come and tell her yourself. You see, Jenny, this has happened because you were disobedient and untrustworthy, and you must be brave and take the blame you deserve. And we must go now, at once, because if anyone has taken Kinza, every moment may matter. Daddy will come with us."

It was a silent little party that set out from the hotel. Mr. Swift suggested that he should do one more quick search of the marketplace while Jenny and her mother searched the gardens again. Ten minutes later they met again, solemn and worried.

"Well," said Mr. Swift, "the sooner we get Rosemary onto this the better. She can speak the language and question people."

They met Rosemary coming across the market to look for Kinza at the hotel, as it was dinnertime. Mr. Swift told her what had happened, and while he spoke, Jenny stood a little apart, her eyes fixed on the ground,

not daring to look at her aunt's face. She wondered what her aunt would say, and whether she would be angry with her right there in the middle of the market. But nothing was said about her carelessness just then. Everyone seemed to have forgotten about it. All they were thinking about was Kinza.

They went back to the walled garden to see the exact place so that Rosemary could question the shopkeepers nearest the spot, but no one could give her any news. Whatever had happened had happened just on the other side of the archway, and the archway was hidden from the road by a high wall. There were three exits from that part of the garden, and one led straight out onto a lonely country road that branched off in the next couple of miles into a dozen wild mountain tracks.

"There are two possibilities," said Rosemary at last, when all questioning had proved useless. "One is that she has been kidnapped for the sake of her clothes, and in that case the police might help us. The other is that her own people have decided they want her back and have stolen her away. In that case I'm afraid she has gone for good. After all, I have no claim against her own people. I don't even know where she came from; I only know she was not a local child." She stopped short as a new idea came into her head. "I wonder where Hamid is," she went on eagerly. "I've often thought he had something to do with her—he might be able to give us some clue."

But not one of the boys who had collected to see what was going on knew where Hamid was. He had been at his job that morning, and was last seen heading for the mountains. Everyone volunteered to go look for him, and they scattered in all directions, for the Englishman would no doubt reward the finder handsomely. But no one succeeded in finding Hamid, for he was far up the ravine between the great rocks, throwing stones at the monkeys. So frightened was he of meeting his stepfather

that he stayed there till long after sunset and missed the boys' meeting for the first time in many weeks.

The police, when they heard the story, were polite and sympathetic but not very hopeful. They promised to telephone the government outposts in the mountains to watch the main tracks and check up on travelers. But even if the child was found, what was there to prove that she did not belong to her captors?

There was no more they could do, so they went sorrowfully back to Aunt Rosemary's house to have some tea. But none of them felt hungry, and after a while Mr. and Mrs. Swift got up to go. Jenny, pale and wretched, followed them, still not daring to look at her aunt, who had actually hardly given her naughtiness a thought yet. She was far too worried about what could have happened to Kinza.

Rosemary was glad to be left alone. She carried out the tea things and then came back into her little room and knelt down, meaning to pray for Kinza. But the kitten sprang up beside her, mewing for its little playmate, and under the cushion on which she rested her arms was something hard and knobby— Kinza's wooden doll. She gazed around the room, and there was Kinza's ball, Kinza's mat, Kinza's box of sweets that Jenny had given her. Everywhere she looked, there were signs of the missing, loved little girl, and Rosemary suddenly laid her head down on her arms and cried. Where was Kinza? What was happening to her? How terrified and homesick she would be, how helpless in her blind darkness! "Oh, God," she cried, "take care of her; don't let her be hurt or afraid; bring her back safely to me."

As she prayed she heard a little sob behind her and realized she was not alone in the room. She looked up quickly, and there in the doorway stood Jenny, white-faced and swollen-eyed with crying.

"Jenny!" exclaimed Rosemary. "Does your Mummy know you've come?"

"Yes," said Jenny with a gulp. "I said I must see you alone, so Mummy brought me back to the door. You forgot to lock it, so I just came in, and she says please will you see me home when you've finished with me. I don't suppose you want to see me at all ... because ... because ... it was all my fault about Kinza. Oh, Auntie, whatever shall I do?"

The last words came out with a rush of fresh tears, and Rosemary drew the trembling girl into the room, shut the door, and sat down beside her.

"You can't do anything, Jenny," she said gently, "but God loves Kinza far more than we do, and He can do everything. Let's kneel down and ask God together to shelter little Kinza and comfort her and keep her safe."

So they knelt side by side, and Rosemary prayed that Jesus would protect Kinza. Jenny listened and wondered, more miserable than she had ever been before. It's all very well for Aunt Rosemary, she thought. When dreadful things happened to her, she had a place where she could find forgiveness and peace and comfort. But Jenny knew no such refuge. She felt shut out in the dark. She would never forgive herself, and neither would anyone else, if Kinza was really lost.

For the first time in her life, her naughtiness had really mattered, and there seemed no escape from the terrible results of it. Nearly every day she was self-willed and lost her temper if she couldn't get what she wanted. But Mummy and Daddy were always nice and understanding about it, and remembered that, after all, she had been ill for three months. Now she had gone her own way and disobeyed once too often.

If only Kinza could come back, said Jenny to herself, I would never be disobedient or naughty again. I'd be good forever and ever.

Chapter 16 Rescue Plans

Rosemary spent most of the next day trying to trace Hamid, but Hamid was apparently determined not to be traced. Why should the English nurse want him urgently just then? Perhaps his stepfather had spoken to her and she was going to hand him over. It was all most suspicious, and Hamid decided to keep clear of her.

However, the English nurse was so determined to find him that, on being told that Hamid had gone up into the mountains early, she canceled her boys' meeting and settled herself just before sunset behind the pillar of the great stone archway through which he was likely to return. Before long, a weary little figure skulked in through the shadows, and she grabbed hold of him by what remained of his shirt.

For a moment he struggled violently, but she spoke to him at once, and her words stopped him immediately and he stood still. "Hamid," she was saying pleadingly, "I've lost Kinza. Please can you help me find her again? Do you know where she might have gone?"

She kept tight hold of him, and he stood rigidly in front of her, gazing up at her uncertainly. At first he was too startled to think, but gradually his mind cleared and he began to put two and two together. If Kinza had disappeared, her stepfather had certainly taken her home. And if the nurse was searching for her, then she did not know about their stepfather. But it did not seem safe to tell; it might lead to contact with the police, and no little street boy ever wishes to have anything to do with the police. Or it might lead to meeting his family—or it might all be a trick or a trap. It was far safer to deny everything and have nothing to do with it.

And yet, if he refused to speak, Kinza was lost, and all his efforts were wasted. Kinza had been so happy, so healthy, so safe. Now she would be sold to the beggar—why else should his stepfather want her?—and he would not be there to protect her.

"I don't know anything about it," he said warily after a long pause, but the nurse felt quite sure that he knew a great deal about it—though it might be difficult to worm it out of him. She must proceed very carefully.

"Let's go home and have some supper together," she said soothingly, "and we can talk about it in the house. You must be hungry after being on the mountain all day."

Since he had had little to eat since the evening before, having not been to work, he was ravenously hungry. There was a gnawing pain inside him, and unless he accepted the English nurse's offer, there was very little chance of food that night. It was rather risky to go to her house because, after all, it might be a trick. But he was so hungry!

Nobody can make me talk, he thought, so he slipped a dirty little hand into the hand of the English nurse, and she clasped it firmly and did not let go until they were safely inside her house with the door locked behind them.

She led Hamid upstairs to the room where he had once seen Kinza asleep, and he sat down cross-legged on the mat, sniffing the delicious smell of hot rice and vegetables cooking in the pot on the fire. She brought him a steaming bowlful and a great hunk of bread, and then fetched her own. She did not question him while he ate, for he was completely absorbed in his food, but she watched him thoughtfully. He was so like Kinza in looks—the same dark, bright eyes, heart-shaped face, and determined mouth. She waited until the last drop of food was gone, and the bowl wiped clean with a crust of bread, and then she spoke with a certainty that she did not feel.

"Hamid," she said very firmly, "do you know who has stolen away your little sister, Kinza? If you know, you must tell me, because I want to get her back again."

The English nurse was very tired, very strained, and very afraid that her guess was wrong. Her voice, which had been quite firm, quivered a little as she finished speaking, and that quiver reassured Hamid. This was no trick. It was the honest cry of a loving heart.

“I think my stepfather got her,” he replied. “I saw him watching her in the market yesterday. He followed her right across the square, but I thought she was safe with you.”

The nurse was surprised by her success, but she did not show it. She went on speaking very quietly. “Where does your stepfather live?”

Hamid told her the name of the village.

“Didn’t he know she was with me?”

“No.”

The nurse made another guess. “Why did you put her in my passage that night?”

“My mother told me to.”

“Why?”

“My stepfather did not want Kinza. He was going to sell her to a beggar. Kinza would have been very unhappy, so my mother sent her to you.”

“And now?”

“My stepfather will sell her to the beggar. He wants the money.”

The nurse shuddered. Kinza’s prospects were far worse than she had imagined, and she must save her somehow. She went on quietly questioning. “How far is the village?”

“Two days’ journey on a horse—but my stepfather probably came by road on a market truck. That only takes about six hours.”

“And you—how did you come?”

“Partly on a truck, mostly walking.”

“And Kinza?”

“On my back.”

The nurse marveled at his courage. Surely Hamid, who had dared so much for Kinza’s sake, would help her now!

“And if I went to your village and offered to pay your father more than the beggar, would he let me buy back Kinza?”

“I don’t know; he might. But how would you know the house? There are many parts of the village with hills between.”

“You must come with me and show me.”

“I can’t. My stepfather would beat me dreadfully if I went home.”

“You need not go home. You can point out the house from a distance.”

“But everyone in the village knows me. They will tell my stepfather.”

“We will arrive after sunset in Mr. and Mrs. Swift’s car. No one will see you in the dark. Surely you will do this to save Kinza.”

Hamid scratched his head doubtfully, battling with his fears.

“Hamid,” she pleaded, “if you refuse I won’t be able to find her. The beggar will have her, and she will suffer and be cold and hungry in the streets of a big city, and all her life she’ll live in the dark. If she comes back to me, she will grow up happily, and I will teach her about the Lord

Jesus and how He loves her. I've told you about Him so often, Hamid. Do you believe in Him yet?"

He glanced up at her shyly, but his eyes were bright. "I love the Lord Jesus very much," he replied simply. "He has forgiven me for all I have done wrong and made my heart happy."

"Then He can also make your heart brave," she urged. "Let's ask Him now, Hamid, to take away your fear and to save Kinza."

He shut his eyes obediently, and as the nurse prayed he repeated the words after her. While he was speaking, two thoughts came into his mind. If the Lord Jesus really loved him, He would not let his stepfather beat him, and so there was nothing to be afraid of. He also thought what fun it would be to drive all the way to his village in the Englishman's big, fast, grey car.

Even while he prayed, the Spirit of God breathed happy, brave thoughts into his troubled heart, so when they had finished praying he was quite ready to agree to the nurse's suggestions, and he finally left the house feeling very excited. As he wandered across the marketplace, he imagined himself sitting upright at the car window, waving proudly like a king to his friends. He suddenly laughed with delight and skipped in the air. His stepfather would do anything for money, and the nurse would certainly offer more than the beggar would give.

As soon as he had left the house, Rosemary set off for the hotel to discuss her plan with Mr. and Mrs. Swift. They had taken Jenny up into the mountains for a picnic, but she had not wanted to go and had been in a bad mood all day.

She found them sitting in the lounge looking tired and depressed.

"Has anything happened?" they asked eagerly, jumping up as soon as they saw her.

"Yes," said Rosemary, unable to hide her excitement. She dropped into an empty chair, and leaning forward, she poured out the wonderful story.

"Of course, I've gone and fixed it all up with Hamid without consulting you," she ended, "but I felt quite sure you'd be willing, because you've been so concerned about Kinza. We would have to start tomorrow afternoon—it's about six hours' drive—in order to arrive after sunset. Then Hamid says it's a good walk on beyond where the car can go. We would not be back till after midnight, but I didn't think you'd mind that."

"Of course not," Mrs. Swift assured her, as eager as she was. "John shall take you and Hamid, and I'll stay with Jenny. I don't think she ought to go."

"There'll be no end of trouble if she's left behind," said her father, and the eagerness vanished from their faces and they both sighed.

"Is Jenny in bed?" inquired Rosemary. "Could I tell her all about it, or will she be asleep?"

Mr. and Mrs. Swift glanced at each other, and there was a moment's silence. Then Mrs. Swift spoke. "Yes, do go and tell her," she said. "Rosemary, I wish you could somehow talk her into a better mood. She's so fond of you, and I don't seem to be able to do anything with her tonight. We've had such a miserable day because she didn't want to go on the picnic. She wanted to stay and help you look for Kinza. Of course, I know she's been ill and all that, but really she does behave like a spoiled baby when she can't get her own way."

"I sent her to bed when we got in," added Mr. Swift gloomily. "Her tempers are just getting too much. She's not used to being punished and

took it very badly, so I don't know what sort of mood you'll find her in. She'll certainly kick up an awful fuss if she's not allowed to go tomorrow."

"Poor Jenny!" said Rosemary. "I'll go and see if she's still awake," and she climbed the stairs rather slowly and knocked at the door. There was no answer. She opened the door and went in.

"What do you want?" said a sullen voice from under the bedclothes. "I haven't gone to sleep early like you said, so you needn't think I have."

"It's me, Jenny," said Rosemary quietly, and went over and sat down on the bed.

Jenny came out at once, rather embarrassed, for she always spoke politely in front of Aunt Rosemary, wanting her to think she was a nice child. However, Mummy and Daddy had probably been talking about her, and she must make Aunt Rosemary see her point of view. Surely she would understand and see how ill-treated she was.

"Oh, Auntie Rosemary," cried Jenny, bursting into tears, "I'm so glad you've come! I've been thinking about Kinza all day long."

"Oh, no, you haven't," replied Rosemary in a very matter-of-fact voice. "You've been thinking about yourself all day long, and that's why you're so unhappy. Selfish people are always unhappy because they mind so much when they can't have their own way."

"I'm not selfish," sobbed Jenny angrily. "You don't understand any more than Mummy and Daddy do. I couldn't stop wondering where Kinza was, and they took me away where I couldn't find out or hear if there was any news."

"But your hearing the news wouldn't have helped Kinza at all," replied Rosemary. "It would just have satisfied your own curiosity. And because

you couldn't be satisfied, you made Mummy and Daddy miserable all day long, and if that's not selfish I don't know what is."

Jenny could think of nothing to say to that, so she just repeated, "You don't understand."

"Oh, Jenny, Jenny, I understand so well," cried Aunt Rosemary, suddenly kneeling down and drawing the angry, hot little girl toward her. "I understand that because you have always had everything you want, and because Mummy and Daddy have always given you such lovely things and been so good to you, you think nothing matters in the world except your own happiness. Your heart is like a little closed-in circle with yourself in the middle, and every time something happens that hurts or annoys you, you think the world is coming to an end. As you get older, Jenny, you will find that there are more and more things that will annoy and hurt you, and you are going to grow into a very unhappy, unloving person. You see, you haven't really time or room to love anyone else properly because you're too busy loving yourself."

Jenny was quite silent. No one had ever talked to her like this before. Her mother and father usually ended by saying, "Never mind, darling; we're sure you didn't mean it. Let's forget all about it."

But perhaps Auntie Rosemary was partly speaking the truth. She often did feel very, very unhappy, simply because it was not always possible for her to have her own way. She thought of a girl at school who had wanted to learn to ride a horse, and who had wanted a new dress for a party, but she couldn't have either because her father couldn't afford it. Yet she had not made a fuss about it and had seemed to really enjoy the party even though she was wearing one of her sister's old dresses. Jenny could not understand it.

“I can’t help minding things,” said Jenny at last in a small, hurt voice. “And I do love people. I love Mummy and Daddy and you and Kinza and lots of people.”

“Only as long as we please you,” replied Rosemary. “As soon as we stop doing what you want, you are quite happy to make us miserable, as you’ve made Mummy and Daddy miserable today.”

Jenny was silent again. It was no good trying to make Aunt Rosemary understand her, because apparently she knew all about her, but it made her feel peaceful in a strange kind of way. Jenny suddenly felt she could stop pretending.

“I do want to be good and happy,” she whispered, “and I do want to make Mummy happy. But I can’t. I just seem to mind things so much that I can’t help being cross.”

“Yes,” agreed Rosemary thoughtfully, “I know. The only way you can change is to ask Jesus into your heart, and He will come into the circle and change you. At first you will still want to have your own way, but the more you love Him, the less you will love yourself first. You will want what He wants, and gradually you will become happier and happier and feel more satisfied. It sounds difficult, but it’s really quite simple.”

“Oh, I see,” said Jenny rather sleepily. She had stopped crying and was lying very still. Rosemary waited a moment and then said, “I really came to tell you some news of Kinza. We’ve discovered where she’s gone, and tomorrow your father and Hamid and I are going to her home, and we are going to try to persuade her stepfather to let us have her back.”

“Oh, where? When? How?” cried Jenny, springing up in bed. “Tell me all about it quickly! Can I come too?”

“No,” said Rosemary, “you can’t. Mummy says we will get back too late, and probably the fewer of us who go the better. You’ve got a chance to make up for today by obeying without being cross and sulky. Now I’ll tell you how I found out and all about it.” As she told her, Jenny lay and listened quietly.

It was all going to come out right after all, perhaps, and she did not deserve it. Last night she had made a sort of promise—“If Kinza comes back, I’m going to be good forever and ever.”

“Auntie,” she whispered, her face half-buried in the pillow, “tell Mummy to come. I want to tell her I’m sorry and that I’ll be good tomorrow.”

Chapter 17 An Exciting Night

The next day dawned bright and clear, and the rescue party set off early in the afternoon. Jenny, desperately disappointed that she wasn’t going, too, but determined to make the best of it, stood and waved them off. Hamid, all his fears forgotten in the thrill of being inside the beautiful car, sat in the backseat like a prince and nodded proudly to the crowd of openmouthed, admiring urchins running behind. Far down the road they followed, shouting and hooting, rags fluttering. Hamid stuck his head far out of the window and yelled with triumph, and Rosemary pulled him in again by the seat of his trousers.

It was a beautiful drive. Hamid remembered the hot, dusty evening when he had toiled up the same hill with Kinza on his back. He had been too tired then to look about him and admire the view, but now he wanted to see everything, and he leapt from side to side of the car like a monkey in a cage.

Later he slept, curled up on the backseat, and when he woke he found the car had stopped in an area surrounded by mountains, and the

Englishman and the nurse were drinking tea and eating sandwiches. Hamid was given a sugar bun, and he thought he was in heaven.

Only one thought spoiled his pleasure. As the sun sank toward the western mountains, the grey car was traveling toward his village and his stepfather. The big Englishman and the nurse had promised that he would be kept safe, so he was not really very afraid. He laid his head on his arms on the window ledge, thinking. He was coming near to his mother, too, and his heart cried out for her. It would be hard to be so close and yet be unable to see her or speak to her. Two big tears brimmed up in his eyes and trickled over onto the shiny leather car seats.

After a while, the car turned off the main road onto a stony mountain road, traveling more slowly between scrubby hills where the villages of the mountain people nestled. Children were bringing their goats home, and several times the car had to stop while a small figure and his flock crossed the road.

Then the sun set behind the hills, and Hamid could see the shape of his home mountain in the distance with two bright stars twinkling above it. His heart began to beat very fast and his mouth felt rather dry.

It was quite dark when they reached the familiar marketplace. They drove beyond the few shops to where the rough road dwindled into a track, and there Mr. Swift stopped the car.

Hamid tumbled out and ran behind an olive tree while the nurse spoke to a boy standing in the doorway of a house and asked him to mind the car. Hamid knew this boy and did not wish to be recognized by anyone, so he waited until the boy's back was turned, and then came skulking out from his hiding place and without a word set off quickly along the familiar path, with Mr. Swift and the nurse hurrying along behind him. This was the very track up which he had toiled on hot summer evenings carrying Kinza

home from market; here was the fountain where he and Rahma had filled buckets at sunrise; to his left was the burying ground, with the three little graves where the marigolds grew; and there in front of him, at the top of the hill, gleamed the lights in the cottages on the outskirts of the village. Just another fifty yards' climb and he could see his own lamplit doorway and the rosy glow of the charcoal fire. He stopped short and beckoned his followers to his side.

"There," he breathed, pointing toward it. "It is the third house beyond the fig tree. You just push the gate open—there is no latch. Don't be afraid of the dog—he's chained. And remember, you have promised not to tell my stepfather."

"Yes, Hamid," said the nurse quietly, "I've promised. And if he comes with us to the car you must hide until he goes away. We will not leave without you. Otherwise, we'll meet you here."

They went cautiously on up the rocky path, and Hamid went off to hide himself safely behind the bushes at the bottom of the burying ground. Crouching there, hugging his knees, he remembered his first escape, when he had crept down the hill at midnight and felt so afraid of evil spirits in the dark. Suddenly he realized he was not afraid anymore, and then remembered why. Death was no longer a place of shadows and lost spirits—it was simply a door into the light and sunshine of God's home, and the nurse had said that little children who had no knowledge of good and evil were welcome there, so his little brothers and sister were safe and happy after all. Hamid suddenly wished he could go there, too, instead of crouching like an outcast within sight of his own home. He longed for the warm fireside, for the nuzzling goats, for Rahma and, above all, for his mother. His heart strained toward her. Surely she would hear and come.

Mr. Swift and Rosemary made their way by flashlight, in single file, along the mud track that led to Hamid's home.

Nobody saw them passing, and when they reached the gate, it was as he had said. It opened with a gentle push, and they stepped out of the shadows and stood hesitating in the light that streamed through the open doorway.

There was the rattle of a chain and the big black dog leaped up and strained on its lead. The bearded man sitting just inside glanced out, saw them, and rose instantly and crossed the hut. There seemed to be a sort of scuffle inside, a quick murmur of low voices, and then the master of the house appeared, smiling and bowing and full of polite greetings. He invited his guests to enter and tell their business inside and to share their meal, even though the food was poor. Stooping, they passed through the low doorway and stood in the tiny dim room, looking around.

There was a young woman with a sad, patient face squatting by the fire and a shy, little dark-eyed girl nestling against her. In a shadowed corner, leaning against a bundled-up blanket, sat an older woman. She did not come forward to greet them; she remained in her corner, silent and watchful. The master spread a sheepskin on the floor and asked his guests to sit down with their backs to her.

There was no sign of Kinza at all, and the nurse's heart sank—perhaps they had all come on a wild-goose chase.

Expressing polite surprise at the late hour of their visit, the black-bearded man told the young woman to serve them with sweet mint tea, and as they sipped he asked why they had come.

"I have come to find out about your little blind girl, Kinza," replied the nurse, speaking very firmly. "She was left in my charge by her brother

about seven months ago. I have grown very fond of the child and would very much like to have her back. She is your child, and it must be as you wish, but I am willing to pay a price for her—and of course her mother can come see her from time to time."

There was an instant's silence while Si Mohamed, completely taken by surprise by the assurance in her voice, hesitated. She had mentioned paying a price, and he would do almost anything for money; she would pay more than the beggar. On the other hand, he might get into trouble for having taken her, and there was the question of her fine clothes. Kinza had arrived home after dark, wrapped in a potato sack, and had been kept out of sight ever since. He had sold her clothes to some Spaniards that very morning. It was too much to risk. He pretended to look surprised and spread out his hands, palm upward.

"But I don't know where she is," he assured her in an injured voice. "True, her brother stole her away about seven months ago, but since then I have neither seen her nor received news of her. If the boy has told you that this is her home, he is speaking the truth, but the child is not here. If I hear news of her, I will gladly bring her to you."

There was a long pause. Rosemary's eyes met the eyes of the young woman sitting at the other side of the fire. They were fixed on her very steadily and— was it imagination, or did she really give a very faint nod in the direction of the old woman?

Rosemary turned on her sheepskin and looked all around the room. There was only one possible place for Kinza to be hidden, and that was under the blanket behind the old woman. No longer caring anything about manners, she got up suddenly and stepped across the room and called out Kinza's name at the top of her voice three times over.

The man stood on his feet, pale with fright; the old woman clutched at the blanket, but she was too late. At the sound of the well-known, well-loved voice, Kinza sprang up with a loud answering cry and frantically struggled out from under the blanket. Rosemary almost lifted the old woman out of the way, and the next moment Kinza was in her arms, clinging to her as though she would never let go.

Kinza's joy was indescribable; all the terror was over and she was safe again in the arms of her protector. The last two-and-a-half days had been a nightmare of jolting and cold, as she had lain all night wrapped in a sack on the boards of a truck trailer, of smacks when she cried, of hunger and fear and bewilderment, and of rough hands that had snatched her from her mother's arms. But that was all over now. Her strained body relaxed and she lay at peace. Rosemary turned to face the stepfather.

He had risen threateningly, his face pale with anger and fear, and Mr. Swift had risen, too, and stood ready to act if necessary. He was a big man, and Si Mohamed realized in a moment that his only hope now was to give in graciously and strike a good bargain.

"There," he said rather nervously, "you have found her, and now she will be your daughter. You are very welcome to her, and with you I know she will be safe and happy. Now tell me what are you willing to pay for her?"

Rosemary mentioned a sum much higher than Hamid had told her the beggar had offered. Si Mohamed, terrified that her clothes were going to be mentioned and only anxious to get rid of his unwelcome guests, accepted the offer at once.

He came forward to receive the money, with expressions of delight that Kinza should be so honored, and Kinza screamed when she heard the dreaded voice approaching.

Rosemary handed over the money and bent over the frightened child. "It's all right, Kinza," she whispered. "Don't be afraid. He can't touch you. You're my little girl now."

Reassured and trustful, Kinza stuck two fingers in her mouth and lay still, content and unafraid in the arms of her friend. She was soon fast asleep. She did not know that a long journey had been taken for her sake and that a high price had been paid to buy her back again, but the voice that had never yet told her a lie had said, "Don't be afraid; you're my little girl now."

There was nothing left to do but get away as quickly as possible before any further trouble arose. Rosemary said a brief good-bye to the old woman and the stepfather and turned to speak to the mother, but her seat by the charcoal pot was empty. Only the little girl sat watching, solemn and big-eyed. The mother had slipped out unnoticed while the payment was being arranged, and, caring nothing for her husband's anger, she was hurrying down the steep path that led from the village, calling softly and breathlessly to her son.

She guessed he must be near, for how else could they have found their way to the house? But even so, she was startled when a little figure ran out from the shadows of the olive trees on the outskirts of the burying ground and kissed her hand. She pulled him fearfully back into the dark safety of the trees and looked into his upturned face. "Little Son, Little Son," she whispered, for she knew their time was short, "how are you? Are you all right?"

"I'm fine," he whispered back. "I work in the town and all is well. But Kinza—have they got her?"

His mother nodded. "The Englishwoman paid a price for her and will take her as her daughter. I have no more fear for Kinza. All will be well for her,

and she will never suffer or be beaten or beg. But you, little son ... come back to me. I miss you so.”

He shook his head slowly. “I dare not,” he breathed. “Si Mohamed would kill me with a beating. I have work and can live, and the English nurse feeds us at night. Besides, she has a Book about Jesus, the man she told you about who took children in His arms, and in that book is written the way of God, which leads to heaven. What she tells us from her Book makes my heart happy, and I must know more.”

He was speaking very earnestly, and she drew him close against her. He had grown taller, but he was so thin, and to her he still seemed such a little boy. Yet all on his own he had found happiness. She could see his face brighten in the moonlight as he spoke. If only she could follow him. She had no happiness.

“Then you must come and tell me, Little Son,” she urged. “I want to be happy too. Your stepfather won’t beat you. He has to pay a boy to look after his goats, and he often grumbles because you are not here to work for him. He would be glad to see you back.”

He rested his head against her shoulder and sat very still, thinking hard. He was tired of traveling and wandering and fending for himself, tired of trying to be a man before his time. All he wanted was to be a little boy again and lean unashamed against his mother in the dark for a while and then to go home.

But if he did that, he would never learn to read from the nurse’s Book and perhaps he would forget the way to heaven. Besides, he was still very afraid of his stepfather. Slowly, and after a long silence, he made up his mind.

“I will go back now,” he whispered, “and I’ll learn to read from the Book that tells the way to heaven. Then when the harvest is ripe, I’ll come and tell you all about it. Only ask Si Mohamed not to beat me.”

Steps sounded on the path and the light of the flashlight was flashed onto them. They rose quickly and came out into the open moonlight. The mother stooped and kissed her sleeping baby quickly, whispered a blessing on the nurse, and gave her hand to her son. Then without another word she turned up the hill and went back to the punishment that awaited her, content and unafraid. Kinza was safe forever, and she had seen her little boy. All was well with him and he had promised to come home. Nothing else mattered.

The little party hurried toward the valley. Mr. Swift carried Kinza, and Rosemary held the flashlight; Hamid bounded ahead, knowing every inch of the way. They had almost reached the car when they heard quick steps behind them and angry shouting. It was Si Mohamed, coming after his runaway boy. His wife’s disappearance had roused his suspicions. The quiet joy in her face on her return had confirmed them.

“My stepfather!” gasped Hamid, and he made for the car like a hunted rabbit. Finding the door locked, he stood jumping up and down, squeaking with fear. The nurse was only a few seconds behind him, and the big Englishman tossed Kinza into her arms as though she were a bundle of washing, jammed the key in the lock, dived into the front, started the car, and opened the back doors. The nurse, Kinza, and Hamid all seemed to fall in at once as the car moved off with a triumphant roar. It shot past the empty marketplace, bumping horribly, leaving Si Mohamed standing alone under the eucalyptus trees, very angry and out of breath, while his stepson flung himself back against the shiny cushions and started to laugh.

Five minutes later, they had all settled themselves comfortably and were over their fright. Kinza slept deeply and peacefully, worn out by the terror and uncertainty of the past three days. Hamid rested his brown arms on the window, and his gaze wandered to the twin peaks above his home. He knew that he would come back, alone and on foot, one summer evening when the fields were ripe for harvest. And he would not feel afraid, for Jesus had said, "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

* John 8:12

Chapter 18 New Beginnings

While Mr. Swift, Rosemary, and Hamid rescued Kinza, Jenny spent a long, long day at the hotel. It was a day in which she had plenty of time to think.

She wished she knew more about the Lord Jesus and had a Bible so she could read about Him. She thought about the picture at the clinic, and it reassured her that He loved children and wanted to come into her heart and change her. Instead of being cross, spoiled, and vain, she could be strong and happy and loving. "Like putting a candle inside an empty lantern, so that the light shines out," Aunt Rosemary had said.

"Lord Jesus, please come into my life," Jenny prayed.

That night she had so much to think about that she was sure she would never go to sleep, and yet her eyes closed almost immediately, and the next thing she knew her mother was shaking her gently. Auntie Rosemary was sitting at the foot of the bed, laughing and holding in her arms a bundle wrapped up in the car rug.

"It's Kinza!" cried Jenny, flinging herself on the bundle and hugging and kissing her. It was two o'clock in the morning, so they had to talk in

whispers because of the other guests, but Jenny wanted to know all about the rescue.

Everyone was hungry, so they made some tea. Mrs. Swift spread butter and honey on some bread and passed around biscuits. Never had there been a happier midnight feast, and Jenny knew that she would remember that hour all her life. Kinza had been brought back, and all Jenny's naughtiness had been forgiven and forgotten. She was going to start again, a new child in a new, happy life. Sitting there in bed with all the people she loved best grouped around her, and her mouth full of bread and honey, she felt so happy she thought she would burst. Her mother said rather weakly four times that they really must all go to bed, but no one took the slightest notice; they just went on eating and whispering. When Mr. Swift told them how they had escaped from Si Mohamed, he fell backward in his excitement. Everyone tried so hard not to laugh out loud, then Kinza woke and sat up, blinking at them solemnly like a baby owl. She didn't seem to like all this midnight merriment, but after a few moments she cuddled back in the rug and went to sleep again. Then Mrs. Swift said for the fifth time that they really must go to bed, and Mr. Swift said, "All right, but let me have just one more piece of bread because falling off the bed made me hungry again." And then Rosemary wanted another piece, and so did Jenny, and her mother thought she might as well have one too.

Then Mrs. Swift said for the sixth time that they really must go to bed, and this time they did listen to her. They all kissed Jenny good night and tucked her in bed, and then went off down the passage laughing at Mr. Swift, who was trying to walk quietly in his enormous, squeaky shoes, like an elephant trying to walk on tiptoe. Jenny was left alone with her happiness. God had heard their prayers, and Kinza had come back.

Everyone slept the next morning till the sun was high—except Hamid and Rosemary. They got up at the usual time, Hamid because he had slept well all night on the backseat of Mr. Swift’s car, and Rosemary because she had a busy day ahead of her. It was still quite early when she was disturbed by a loud knocking, and she got up with a little sigh. When she opened the door, she found Hamid, his hands and face pink and shining from washing in the fountain.

His rags were dreadfully torn and dirty, and he had nasty sores on his legs, but the child was as eager and full of life as the spring morning. He kissed the nurse’s hand, chuckled, and hopped uninvited over the threshold. He seemed to have come for a particular reason but didn’t know what to say. “How’s Kinza?” he inquired.

“She’s all right,” said the nurse. “Do you want to see her?”

For an answer, he skipped upstairs ahead of her to where Kinza lay in her old corner on the mat, her dark head pillowed on her arm, fast asleep. Hamid nodded, well-pleased, and then looked around hopefully to see if there was any chance of something to eat. He had timed his visit perfectly, for the English nurse was just in the middle of her breakfast. Hamid sat cross-legged on the floor with bright, hopeful eyes. He had not eaten honey sandwiches in the night, and he was very hungry.

The nurse gave him a bowl of sweet coffee and a big hunk of bread. He sipped it noisily, chuckling with pleasure between mouthfuls. When he had finished and cleaned out the bowl with his finger for fear of wasting any sugar, he came a little closer and said confidently, “Teach me to read.”

The nurse looked at him doubtfully. “Many people want to learn to read and they only keep it up for about two weeks. Then my time is all wasted.”

Hamid shook his head very firmly. “I would go on every day, until harvesttime,” he said, “because then I am going home. My stepfather will be glad to see me at harvest because he’s so busy. Could I learn to read before harvest?”

“I would think so,” replied the nurse, “if you really come every day.” She thought of her busy days and wondered when she would fit him in, but the child seemed so keen and determined.

“Why do you want to learn to read, Hamid?” she asked.

He lifted a serious brown face to hers and told her his simple little story.

“I want to go home,” he said. “But if I go home and can’t read, who will go on teaching me the way to heaven?”

“Then you believe it really is the way to heaven?”

“Yes. I had a dream. I saw the Lord Jesus with His arms stretched out. I think He was on a cross. And behind the cross was a door, wide open, and He told me it was the way to God. And He told me I was to come to you because it was all written down in your Book.”

“Very well,” said the nurse quietly. “You can come every day just about this time. We’ll start at once.”

She fetched her book of Arabic letters and found him to be a very quick pupil. By the end of half an hour, he had learned quite a number of letters and was really pleased with himself.

“Aa–d–dd–rr–z,” he chanted proudly. “Now I can read!”

He skipped off with his head held high, and the nurse went back with a happy heart to clear the breakfast things.

Chapter 19 Aunt Rosemary Explains

It was very nearly the end of the holiday, and on the last Saturday, Mummy, Daddy, Aunt Rosemary, Jenny, and Kinza all started off early in the morning and went for a picnic far up in the mountains with a fat picnic basket.

They drove up and up past thatched villages until the road plunged down into the cool shadow of pine woods, where English primroses grew around the roots of the giant trees.

Jenny and Rosemary started picking bunches of the pale yellow flowers. Jenny wanted to tell her aunt her new secret. She must try to tell her today because there might not be another chance, but she did not know how to begin to say it. She prayed for the right opportunity to talk to her aunt. She was sure something very important had happened to her, and wanted she Aunt Rosemary to tell her what to expect next. The day passed, and she just didn't seem to find the right moment to ask her.

They drove home in the evening, Jenny's head leaning against her father's shoulder. She was disappointed because she had not managed to speak to her aunt, and doubts were beginning to creep in. They were driving through a low-water meadow with white lilies growing in clumps by the river. Jenny suddenly remembered that the next day would be Easter Sunday, and she sat up quickly.

Jenny liked Easter Sunday. There were always white flowers on the breakfast table and big, colored Easter eggs around her plate. After breakfast they would go to church, which was decorated with white lilies and narcissi and bright daffodils, and the choirboys in white robes sang, "Jesus Christ is risen today ... Alleluia!"

Here they would not go to church because there was no church to go to, but Jenny decided she could visit Aunt Rosemary early with some white flowers, and perhaps then she could tell her her secret. She laid her hand on her father's arm.

"Stop, Daddy," she said.

Mr. Swift stopped. "What's up?" he inquired.

"I want to get something," Jenny explained. She jumped out of the car and ran backward a little so that they could not see what she was doing. She raced across the field, gathered an armful of lilies from the water's edge, wrapped them in her sweater, and raced back to the car.

"What have you got there, Jenny?" asked her father.

"A secret," replied Jenny. "We can go on now!" Mrs. Swift, who had been watching her nimble little daughter through the back window, smiled and said nothing. It was not till Jenny was tucked in bed and the flowers were up to their necks in the water jug that she understood what it was all about.

"Mummy," said Jenny, "it's Easter Sunday tomorrow, and on Easter Sunday there are always white flowers. Can I get up very early and take my lilies to Aunt Rosemary as an Easter surprise?"

"Of course," answered her mother. "What a lovely idea. She has been so kind to you, Jenny. You can go when you wake up. I expect you'll stay and have breakfast with her. I'll put your clean clothes out now."

She laid out Jenny's best dress and clean socks, kissed her good night, and left her. Jenny went to sleep at once, looking forward to the morning. Perhaps it was all going to turn out right after all.

She woke very early, just at the time when in England the church bells would start ringing to remind people that Jesus Christ had risen. She jumped out of bed, washed and dressed herself extra carefully because it was Easter Day, and set off.

She knocked at the door and Auntie Rosemary, who was up having her breakfast, appeared at the window, surprised at such an early caller. Seeing who it was, she ran down to open the door, and Jenny bounded in joyfully and held up her bouquet.

“White flowers for Easter!” she announced triumphantly. “I picked them yesterday without you seeing me.”

They went upstairs to where breakfast was laid on a white cloth, with a bowl of primroses in the middle of the table. They arranged Jenny’s flowers in a vase behind the primroses and sat down to enjoy themselves.

“It looks like a church at Easter time, doesn’t it?” remarked Jenny. “On Easter Sunday at home, Mummy, Daddy, and I always go to church. It’s a pity there isn’t a church here, isn’t it, so we could all go together?”

“Yes,” answered her aunt. “I really miss going to church. Yet you know, Jenny, it doesn’t really matter in a way. The main reason for going to church is to meet God, and we can meet God anywhere. I meet Him here every day in my room. Just now when you came I was reading the Easter story in my Bible.”

“Will you read it to me if you’ve finished eating?” asked Jenny eagerly, settling herself very comfortably to listen while Aunt Rosemary read to her.

“Jesus met Mary in the garden,” said Aunt Rosemary. “And He met some of the disciples in a little room, and He met two others on the road, and He met Peter on the beach. So you see, it isn’t really necessary to go to a building.”

“No,” said Jenny simply, lifting a bright face. “That’s what I wanted to tell you. The other day ... the day you went to fetch Kinza ... I thought He met me, up on the hillside. I asked Jesus to come and live inside me, like the light in the lantern, and stop me being selfish and cross. And I felt so happy and I thought He had come. But yesterday I began to wonder if it was all really true. Do you think He really came, Auntie? I don’t really feel very different.”

Aunt Rosemary was silent for a moment. Then she said quietly, “Jenny, how did Mary feel quite sure that Jesus had really come to her?”

“When He said her name,” answered Jenny. “It was easy for her. She heard Him and saw Him.”

“Yes, I know,” said Aunt Rosemary. “But it’s really quite easy for us, too, if only we believe that God speaks the truth. I’m going to read you something, Jenny, and then I’m going to tell you a story.”

“Good,” said Jenny, who loved stories. She wriggled close to look at Auntie Rosemary’s Bible. They read Isaiah chapter 43 verse 1:

Thus says the LORD: “... Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.”

“That verse reminds me of Kinza the night we went to look for her,” said Rosemary, glancing at the lump in the corner where Kinza was sleeping. “She was living with me quite happily, but she was stolen and taken away from me. I love Kinza very much and I knew she’d be unhappy, so I went

after her. I found her hungry and frightened and wanting me. She didn't know I was there, but I knew she was there, so what did I do?"

"Shouted her name!" said Jenny with sparkling eyes. She knew this story well and would never tire of hearing it again.

Aunt Rosemary laughed. "Yes, that's right," she said. "I called her by her name. And what did Kinza do?"

"Hustled out from under her blanket in no time!" cried Jenny.

"Yes, she hustled out in no time," repeated Aunt Rosemary. "She was unhappy and frightened, and she knew if she came out she would be safe and happy, so she didn't stop to ask how or why or if it really was me. She knew it was me by the way I called her name, and she came straight into my arms and felt perfectly safe; she knew she could trust me. And that's exactly what happened to you on the hillside, Jenny. You didn't know much about Jesus; you were just miserable and tired of yourself. But Jesus knew all about you, and He wanted to make you good and happy. So He called you by your name, and you knew it was Him and you came at once and felt perfectly safe."

"Only for two days," answered Jenny.

"Yes, exactly," agreed Aunt Rosemary; "That's just what happened to Kinza. She hadn't been in my arms two minutes before her stepfather began talking, and Kinza began to tremble and cry. I was holding her just as close, and loved her just as much, but as soon as she heard the voice of the man who had stolen her and beaten her, she began to feel afraid and wonder if it was all right after all. Sometimes we might worry and feel afraid and wonder if it's all true. But our feelings don't really matter very much, because Jesus doesn't change. He holds us just as close and loves us just as much whether we worry about it or not."

"Oh, I see," said Jenny thoughtfully.

"Now listen to what happened next. I went up to Si Mohamed and I took some money out of my pocket and paid him, and if Kinza had been old enough to understand, I'd have said, 'Don't be afraid, Kinza. I've redeemed you—that means bought you back again. No one can take you away from me now. You're my little girl forever.' But I just whispered, 'Don't be afraid, Kinza; you're my little girl now.' And Kinza did a very sensible thing. She believed me and she stopped being afraid. Although that cruel man was still standing in front of her and talking, she just clung to me as close as she could and fell asleep in my arms and slept all the way home. The only way to stop feeling afraid is simply to believe what Jesus says. He rose again on Easter Sunday so that He could live in the hearts of everybody who hears His call and comes to Him."

Jenny sat quite silent, thinking over what her aunt had said. She felt perfectly happy because now she understood what had really happened. Jesus had loved her and died for her and paid for her and called her and made her His own. All she had to do was simply come and believe Him.

They talked for quite a while after that, and then Kinza woke up and wanted her breakfast, and Jenny went skipping off through the sunshine to find her father and mother. But Rosemary sat very still, watching her curly-headed baby who sat with her face buried in her bowl of milk.

She had felt quite sure for the past few days that it was not safe for Kinza to stay with her any longer. As soon as the stepfather wanted more money, he could easily come and claim the child. For the next few years she must be taken somewhere out of his reach, and the obvious place was Jenny's blind school.

And yet what Rosemary wanted more than anything else for Kinza was that she be brought up by someone who would teach her to love Jesus

while she was still tiny. Now she knew the answer quite clearly. She would ask Jenny to teach Kinza, and pray that the Holy Spirit of God would teach Jenny what to say.

Chapter 20 Partings and Plans

When Jenny was told that Kinza was going home with them, she nearly went wild with joy and excitement, and danced about like a crazy little lamb. The thought of having Kinza to look after on the journey didn't make it so hard to say good-bye to Aunt Rosemary. It was not going to be a very long goodbye, anyway, as Aunt Rosemary was due home on holiday in the summer and had promised to come stay with them.

The evening before they left, Jenny took her aunt and Kinza for a last walk up the mountain, and they sat there together for a little while watching the sunset.

"Are you sad that Kinza's going away, Auntie?" asked Jenny suddenly.

"Well, of course I will miss her dreadfully, but I feel quite happy about her. You see, what I want most of all for Kinza is that she learns to know and love the Lord Jesus while she's still tiny, and now that you know Him you'll be able to teach her. Of course, I expect she'll learn something at the blind school, but such a small child needs someone special all to herself to teach her."

Jenny looked serious. "I don't know that much myself," she replied doubtfully. "Who'll teach me, Auntie Rosemary? At school they don't talk the way you do."

"Yes, it does seem difficult," said Aunt Rosemary. "But it's quite all right, because you've got your Bible, and you've got the Holy Spirit of Jesus in your heart to show you what it means and help you understand it."

"There are such long words in it," said Jenny, still doubtful.

"I'm sure you'll find Mummy and Daddy willing to explain hard words if you ask them," answered Rosemary. "They are interested in everything that interests you. Have you told them what happened to you and why you want to read the Bible?"

"No," said Jenny, frowning. "I wanted to, but somehow I couldn't explain."

"Well, it would be a very good thing to tell them in words," said Rosemary, "but a far more important way is to show them that you are a changed girl— that Jesus is changing your bad-tempered, selfish ways. And as soon as that begins to happen, Mummy and Daddy will know all about it without any telling."

"Yes," agreed Jenny. "They'd certainly be pleased if I really became nice and good and never got into rages, and I expect they'd want to know why too. I think I'd better show them first, and then they'll believe me when I tell them. Let's go home now, and I'll show them I want to help with the packing."

Next morning at dawn, they all gathered at the hotel door to say good-bye. Hamid came to say good-bye to his little sister. Mr. and Mrs. Swift were busy with porters and bills. While she waited, Rosemary stood watching the three children whom she had come to love more than any other children she knew. They stood in a little group by the luggage— beautiful, rich Jenny, ragged Hamid, and blind Kinza. She wondered what lay ahead of them and felt thankful that the light of Jesus' love would guide and protect them. One day they would all meet again in heaven.

A few moments later they had said good-bye, and the car drove off toward the green valley. Jenny's eyes were full of tears, but Kinza, beating

excitedly on the windows, had not yet realized that Rosemary was not also inside. When she did realize, she would no doubt be comforted quickly with a biscuit. They drove around the corner and out of sight, and Rosemary was comforted to find that one of her children, at least, was still close beside her. One great mission of Hamid's young life had been completely successful, but his little sister would never need him again. She would have fine clothes, big cars, and good food. Now he had to return to the deserted marketplace, hunger, homelessness, and rags.

"Come and have breakfast," said the nurse at his side.

He brightened up at once and forgot all his troubles. The thought of hot coffee and bread and butter made the world seem much happier. He raced along beside her, rubbing his hands delightedly. He had no work today because the master had gone to town, so there was plenty of time and, apart from this invitation, little chance of anything to eat.

When breakfast was over, he had his daily reading lesson. He was getting on very fast, and the nurse marveled at him. She had taught all types of children, and it was amazing how quick the street children were to learn. Their wits and memories were sharpened by the struggle they had to just keep alive, and they had trained themselves to look and remember. In a week, Hamid had learned all his letters and knew the repeating exercises by heart; in fact, he was rather boastful about it.

"Now I know everything," he remarked, beaming as he struggled through a few three-letter words.

"Oh, no, Hamid; you are only just beginning. You must practice putting the letters into words, and you must come every day if you want to read the Bible by harvesttime."

He nodded confidently. "By harvesttime," he repeated. "Then I shall go back and read the Word of God to my mother. Then she will know the way to heaven, too, and even if my stepfather beats her and won't give her enough food, the Lord Jesus will make her heart happy."

"Will your stepfather let you read the Word of God to her?"

"Oh, no. But I shall read it in the granary when my mother is grinding corn, and I shall read it to my sister Rahma when we look after the goats on the mountain. Si Mohamed will never know."

"But later on, Hamid, he will have to know if you are going to follow Jesus faithfully. You will have to tell him and he may beat you. But Jesus suffered a great deal for you because He loved you. If you love Him, you must be willing to suffer a little too."

He turned thoughtful, troubled eyes on her. "I do love Him very much," he said, and got up to go, leaving Rosemary happy with his answer.

It wasn't long before Hamid could read, because he worked at it so diligently. To Rosemary it seemed no time at all before she was bringing him his farewell meal of bread and lentils.

Hamid wasn't traveling alone; he had some companions. He had much farther to travel than the others, but packed in with the crusts and the water bottle and the cherries, he carried his precious new Bible—the Word of God, which would guide and protect him. He had Jesus' promise, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:12

Rosemary watched the boys as they scampered away, and at the end of the street they all turned and waved, five bright little figures black against the sky. Then they turned the corner and disappeared into the glorious light of the sunset