

JAKE AND JIMMY AND THE SECRET WISHES

1. THE CANNON

In a dark, damp cellar stood a stack of paint cans. Next to it was a pile of old engine parts. Next to that was a jumble of old furniture. In the middle of this jumble sat two boys. One was Jake. The other was Jimmy.

"I don't think we'll find one here." Jake rocked back on his heels. He looked at Jimmy sadly.

But Jimmy wasn't listening. He pulled something out of a box and set it carefully on the ground.

Jake looked at it. He shook his head. "That's Dad's old record player. I'll bet it doesn't even work. And besides," he added, "you want a violin, don't you?"

Jimmy nodded, and his big blue eyes shone. "Oh, yes! One with shiny wood, just like Aunt Emily's!"

Jake listened to the muffled voices upstairs for a moment. Would Mommy wonder where they were? The cellar was cold and damp. Mommy wouldn't like it if she found them here. And how would they explain that they were looking for something to make into a violin?

Jake scooted closer to Jimmy. "Don't forget," he whispered. "We have to look for wood for a boat, too!"

Jake had wanted a little rowboat ever since cousin Steve had taken him fishing last summer.

Jake and Jimmy knew Mom and Dad did not have money for a boat, or for a violin. But Grandpa Bennet knew how to carve figures out of wood, and Grandpa Edwards made small windmills for people's gardens. If Jake and Jimmy could only find the right materials, surely Grandpa Bennet and Grandpa Edwards could help them make their wishes come true!

Jimmy held up an old record. "Look! Let's try it!"

Jake's eyes were just as blue as Jimmy's. *That's* because they were brothers. Now Jake's eyes began to sparkle, *just* like Jimmy's.

"Yes, let's!" he whispered. "But not too loud!"

In a few minutes, the old record was spinning, and the needle was gliding noiselessly. Jimmy adjusted the volume, but no sound came from the player.

Jake shrugged. "Oh well."

But Jimmy grinned. "I know what we could do!" He searched the floor for a moment. Then he picked up a crumpled wad of paper and dropped it down on the whirling record.

"Look at it go!" Jake forgot to be quiet in his glee. He dropped a penny onto the record and grinned as it was flung several feet away.

"A catapult!" Jimmy shouted, jumping up.

"Shhh!" Jake warned. Then he took charge. "Let's be soldiers," he said. "You go over there, Jimmy. We're Rebels fighting the British!"

Jimmy grabbed a curtain rod and brandished it threateningly. "Get out of our land! This is our America!"

"This is a cannon," Jake decided, pulling the record player into position. He looked around for something to use as bullets.

Jimmy looked too. "Hurry! The Brits are coming!" He picked up a box of nails. "How about this?"

The nails went flying in all directions. Jake poured a few on at a time. Ping! One hit an old table. Ping! Another dropped down on a paint can.

And Jimmy shot his gun. "Bang! Bang-bang!"

Jake crawled under the old table to retrieve one of the nails. When his head reappeared, the blue eyes under the tousled sandy hair were glowing. "Jimmy!" he whispered. He held up a tightly clenched fist. "I found something!"

Jimmy whispered too. "What is it?" He crawled forward cautiously. "What is it?" he whispered again, feeling half frightened. It was dark under the table. Maybe it was a spider, or a frog. Jimmy liked frogs. But what if... what if it was a mouse, or... a rat?!

"Come here!" Slowly, Jake opened his hand. Jimmy's eyes grew big. A marble! But it was not just an ordinary marble. Jake held it up to the light and turned it this way and that. Red. Blue. The colors flashed and spun. Purple. Even gold!

The record player squealed suddenly. Jimmy looked at Jake. And Jake looked at Jimmy.

"Shall we?"



"Oh, let's!"

Carefully, ever so gently, Jake set the marble down on the spinning record. Whoosh! The old player sent the marble spinning away.

Jimmy's eyes widened. "Oooh!"

Jake scrambled after the marble as it skittered across the floor. Close to the record player stood a beautiful old vase. The marble bounced up. Plink! With a soft tinkling sound, the vase cracked. A large piece fell to the floor and shattered.

Jake swallowed and stared at Jimmy. "Do you think it's old?"

Jimmy nodded his head. "Don't you know?" he whispered. "That's Great-grandma's vase. Mommy put it here because she wanted to glue the flower back on."

"Oh." Jake said softly. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know what to do. He had broken Mommy's vase, and she would be sad. It was all his fault!

Gingerly, he tried to scoop up the tiny ceramic pieces. "Ouch!"

Jimmy reached over to help, but Jake began to cry. "Ouch! I cut it, Jimmy!"

Jimmy looked at Jake's hand. It was bleeding. Big red drops splattered on the floor.

"Mommy!" Jimmy jumped to his feet and scrambled up the stairs. "Mom!" He pushed the door open wildly and raced to the kitchen. "Mommy! Come quickly!"

"What's wrong?"

Jimmy didn't answer. He just tugged at Mom's hand.

They clattered down the cellar stairs.

There sat Jake, holding his hand tightly against his shirt.

"Uh, oh," Mommy said brightly. She helped Jake to his feet. "How big a bandage do you need?" She led Jake up the stairs. "How many cotton balls? And how many smiley faces on top?"

In the bathroom, Mom cleaned Jake's hand. She wrapped a bandage around it.

A few minutes later, Jake brushed away the last of his tears and examined his bandaged hand. It was wrapped in white and held together with Band-aids. On each Band-aid was a smiley face.

"There." Mom patted the bandage and gave Jake another hug. "That should fix it!"

Just then, Dad walked in. "What happened here?" he asked. He dropped his briefcase on the table and gave Mom a kiss.

Jimmy looked hopeful. Daddy was a high school teacher. He was very smart. Maybe he would know how to fix the vase. Jimmy told part of the story. Jake filled in the rest. But they didn't tell why they were in the cellar. No. That was their secret! Mom forgot to ask. And Daddy didn't ask either. They were just happy that Jake was all right.

Mommy went to get the broken vase, and Daddy pulled Jimmy a little closer. "Did you ask Mommy if you could go down to the cellar?"

Jimmy shook his head. Jake shook his head too. No, they hadn't.

Mommy came back and shook her head. "It can't be mended," she said sadly.

Jake and Jimmy hung their heads.

"I'm sorry, Mommy."

"Me, too."

Mom wrapped an arm around each of them and kissed the tops of their heads.

"I'm afraid we can't let you stay up tonight, like other Friday nights," she said. She sounded sorry. "I'm sad that you broke the vase. But I'm more sad because you were disobedient"

That night, Daddy read a story from the children's Bible before Jake and Jimmy went to sleep. It was about Daniel. Daniel was put into the den of lions because he prayed to the Lord.

"You have to ask the Lord if you can become as happy and blessed as Daniel," Dad said softly. "Daniel was happy, even when he was in a den of hungry lions. That was because he knew the Lord, and the Lord was with him. Goodnight, boys."

"Goodnight, Daddy."

Jake snuggled deeper under the covers. "Jimmy?" he whispered.

"What?"

"Let's save our money, okay?"

"Okay," Jimmy whispered. He nodded to himself in the darkness. "Then we can buy Mommy a new vase!"