

Heart and Home





Learn these words:

computer (**kəm-pyü-tər**)

forward (**for-ward**)

adventures (**ad –vent – chers**)

Heart and Home

The morning air felt a bit nippy as each of the girls bounced out of bed. Beth and Bailey Anderson were eight-year-old twin girls, and following their normal morning custom, they fought over who would take their shower first. Beth was angry if she didn't make it into the shower before Bailey. After all, Bailey took such long showers, and by the time it was Beth's turn in the shower, the hot water was almost gone.

Oh, how that morning shower felt so refreshing! Both girls loved to just stand under the hot, steamy water, close their eyes, plug their ears, and let the soothing, hot spray bounce off their thick, long hair.

The hot spray felt so relaxing.



This morning was no different. After their shower, Beth and Bailey headed down the stairs, glanced out their

kitchen window, and immediately caught sight of the day smiling back at them from their backyard.

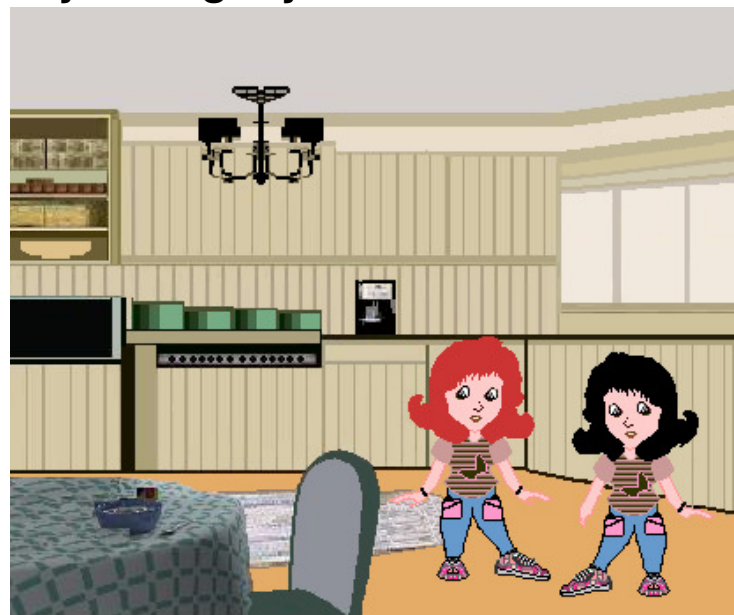
Just as quickly, both girls recognized little Cole Glover. Cole was snuggled into a tire swing that swayed back and forth on one of the big branches of the old willow tree that stood proudly in the Andersons' backyard. The tree's long, golden branches hung almost down to the ground creating a cozy canopy of shade from the bright morning sunlight. That canopy made such a wonderful

leafy playhouse. It was going to be a great day to play outside!

Beth and Bailey brushed their teeth with their electric toothbrushes, slipped into their brown and pink butterfly tee shirts and their trendy boot-cut jeans, shoved on their new pink plaid canvas shoes, and hurried down to breakfast.

Gulping down their favorite cereals, they both talked at once as they planned their morning activities. Just as the girls were headed down the alcove steps that led to the back door, they heard their mother's voice.

“Hold it, girls! You forgot your prayers, and you forgot your chores.”



Grumbling, both girls turned and walked slowly back into the kitchen to read the daily chore list their mother had posted on the refrigerator door.

“Wow, Beth, this list is so long! I can’t believe we have to do all of this stuff everyday. No other parents in this neighborhood care whether their carpets are vacuumed or whether their window sills are dusted. Mom is so picky!” whined Bailey.

“I know,” spouted Beth. “By the time we get done with prayers and chores, Cole will have gone over to Doug’s house, and we’ll be stuck with no one to play with. I wouldn’t put it past Mom to tell us we have to play in our own yard again.”

“Yeah!” Bailey pouted. “She’ll tell us that she wants to be able to see us wherever we’re playing and to know where we are and who we’re playing with – as if we can’t be trusted! Other parents trust their kids.”

“Yeah! Why can’t our Mom trust us?” Beth whined.

The girls routinely said their morning prayers and hurried through their dusting jobs. Just before stomping down the back steps, they heard their mother’s voice once again.

“Girls, did you remember to make up your beds this morning?”

“I can’t believe this!” said Bailey. “We’re never going to get out of this house. I’m so tired of this!”

“I’ve got an idea, Bailey,” answered Beth. “Remember that boy on television last night that ran away from home? We could run away from home.”

“You know, Beth, we really could run away if we only ran away for just the day. We could be back tonight and probably not even be missed,” said

Bailey. “Can you imagine it, a whole day where we could do whatever we wanted to do?”

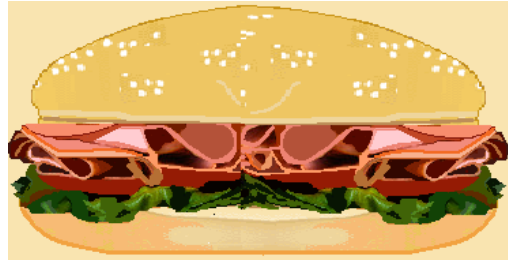
“Let’s do it!” shouted Beth. “Let’s run away, just for the day! We’ll make sure that we’re back home by supper!”

Excited with their plan, Beth and Bailey Anderson raced out their front door.

On one end of the Andersons’ city block was a small gas station; across the street from that station was a tiny gift shop owned by an elderly lady who lived upstairs from the shop. Beth decided

that the gift shop would be boring for kids, because it was filled with too many “older people’s” gifts.

On the other end of their city block was a deli that served chips along with the most delicious sub sandwiches.



Across the street from the deli stood the town’s movie theater and a small coffee shop; just beyond the coffee shop was the city park. Beth and Bailey decided to

stop by the deli first, then take in a movie, and end their “running away” adventure by hanging out at the city park.

“I wonder why we never thought about running away before, Bailey,” asked Beth.

“Well, before today, I never thought about running away because we’ve never really had a good enough reason to run away,” said Bailey.

“That’s true! Why is it again that we are running away? -- I mean, why is our reason for running away today a ‘good enough’ reason?”

“Really, Beth, sometimes you are unreal! We’re running away today because Mom won’t let us do what we want to do and because we think the other kids in our neighborhood do not have the same rules that we have. Other kids on our block get to do things that

we don’t get to do, and by running away, we’re telling the world that we should be treated fairly by our parents.”

“Yeah, you’re right, Bailey! I never thought of it that way. Like the fact that all the McMillan kids get to go out for cheeseburgers at least once a week, and we only get to go out to dinner once a month. Mom’s a good cook and everything, but I get really jealous whenever I hear Bobby McMillan’s dad

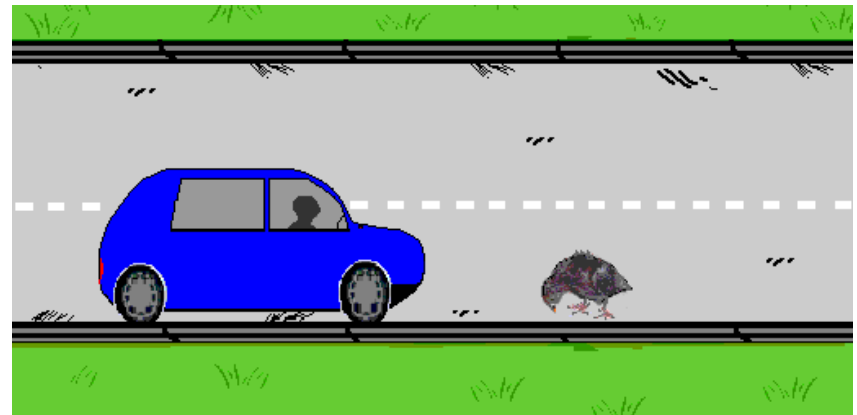
call him and his brothers home so they can all go out to some restaurant.”

“I know, Beth,” Bailey said after they had walked halfway down their block, “and the other thing that really bothers me is...” Bailey did not finish her sentence, because at that moment, she spotted something small and grey limping and fluttering in the grass about fifty feet ahead of them.

As the girls drew closer, what looked like some kind of bird attempted flight, but

instead, plunged steeply downward landing on the curb next to the busy, city street.

“Oh no! I think it’s a pigeon, Beth, and it’s hurt! If it gets any closer to the street, it’s going to get run over by a car!”



“Look, Bailey! Whatever it is, it just hopped into the street and two vans are coming!” Bailey and Beth ran toward the street. Beth tried to motion the driver of the first van to slow down as she pointed to the fluttering pigeon, but the driver ignored her, maintained his speed, and drove right at the bird.

All at once, the bird pitched forward, desperately trying to flap its wings, and toppled face-first back down next to the curb just clearing the van’s tires. Beth and Bailey felt helpless!

Fortunately, the second driver saw the bird, slowed down, and stopped. The driver got out of the van and shooed the bird back up onto a large patch of spongy moss.

Bailey got close enough to the bird to positively identify it as a pigeon -- a pigeon with missing feathers, a limp foot, and an injured right wing.

After the driver got back into his van and drove away, Bailey grabbed the front end of her tee shirt and stretched it out.

“Pick up the pigeon, Beth, and set it in the middle of my shirt, said Bailey. We have to get this pigeon home.”

“What about running away, Bailey? What about what happened this morning with all the chores Mom gave us?”



“We can’t run away now, Beth! We need to get this pigeon home where Mom can nurse it back to health like she did the McMillan cat last summer when it ran off

and got attacked by that stray bulldog. This little pigeon is limping, it’s hungry, it can’t fly, and it’s feathers are gone. We need to get it to a warm, safe place where it won’t get attacked by a cat or a dog. We need Mom to wrap up its broken leg and place it near a hot water bottle. We need to have Mom find it a cozy place to rest and heal, a cozy box or something where its life won’t be in danger. Maybe if Mom can nurse it back to health, its feathers will grow back. Don’t you want this bird to live in a safe, loving home like we have?” asked Bailey.



“Wait a minute, Bailey! I thought we were running away from home because we don’t like the home we have and we don’t like all the rules Mom gives us?” retorted Beth.

“Come on, Beth! Get real! The rules aren’t so bad! At least we get three good meals a day, a hot shower, and a clean bed to sleep in. Those are all the same things that this bird needs. Mom and

Dad may be different in some ways from other parents, but we know they love us. Let’s name the bird, Pidgy.”

“Whatever, Bailey! But you know that Dad and Mom are probably going to ask us where we’ve been, and I’m not going to lie.”

“Well, just remember, Beth, running away for the day was your idea as much as it was mine!” said Bailey.

“Yes, I know! answered Beth.

Sure enough, when the twins reached their front yard with the pigeon, their parents were waiting sternly on the front steps. After Beth explained to their parents what they had decided to do that day and why they had run away, both girls told the story of the injured pigeon and how sorry they were for believing that the same home they felt was safe enough to bring their new pigeon back to was also the same home they felt was



uncomfortable enough to run away from that morning.

“Well, Beth, Bailey, I’m sorry to inform you that you will not be taking part in that roller skating party scheduled for this Saturday, said Mr. Anderson. However, it isn’t so much your wrong behavior that concerns me; it is your sinful hearts that grieve me.”

“Our sinful hearts? What do you mean, Dad?” asked Bailey.

**“Yes, what are you talking about?”
asked Beth.**

**“Girls, the Bible tells us that our hearts
are ‘deceitful’ and ‘desperately wicked.’
What that means for each of you and for
your mother and I is this: it is easy for
all of us to find the bad in our lives and
in the people around us, but it is difficult
for us to find the good in our
circumstances and in the people around
us. We cannot change our own hearts;
we’re not capable of doing that on our
own. Only God can change our hearts,**

**and that is what God has begun to do for
both of you today. He has given you
both an opportunity, in spite of your sin,
to have a changed heart. God used this
little pigeon to help that process along.”**

“How so, Dad?” asked Bailey.

**“Well, each of you began your day
concentrating on what you perceived to
be shortcomings in your life. However,
as you obeyed the promptings of the
Holy Spirit that God gave you after you
found the pigeon, God was able to help**

you both see some of the blessings in your life. Beth, Bailey, I think we should stop and pray, and I think you girls should lead that prayer.

Beth prayed first. “Dear Lord, I am sorry for thinking bad thoughts about my mom and dad. I am sorry that I didn’t have a good attitude, and I’m sorry for not appreciating all the good things my parents do for me.”



“Dear Lord,” Bailey continued, “I feel the same way. Please forgive me and would you make Pidgy better?”

Dad finished their prayer with these words: “Thank you, Lord, for bringing my two little girls home safely today. Thank you for giving them this pigeon and for giving them the opportunity to do something good for one of your creations. And, Lord, thank you for teaching Beth and Bailey that gratefulness is the key to happiness. In Jesus Name, Amen!”

“Come on, girls!” shouted Mom. “Let’s get Pidgy into a warm box and take him

over to the vet. Fixing up the injuries that this pigeon has will require skills that I do not have.”

Smiling, Beth, Bailey, and Mom headed to the car with Pidgy, trusting God to help them through the next part of their day’s adventure.

