

**Character  
Construction  
Crew  
(Stories 11-20)**



## **Character Construction Crew stories**

**--20 More Stories, Part 2--**

**(Stories 11-20)**

(ISA-inspired from Above)

By CQ (unedited and unproofread)

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## **We don't have to be Perfect**

“We'll get this done in no time at all!” Harolt Hoowalhelp was heard to yell above the din of the roaring motors of the work vehicles.

But just then they struck a problem.

“There's a problem! Stop!” he called out and motioned for the digger to cease while they figured out what was going on.

“All of a sudden there is a pool of water. Now either we've discovered a hidden spring of fresh water, or—and I think this might be more the case—we just hit a water pipe that no one knew or no one told us about!” Harolt Hoowalhelp explained.

Jeffery Just-in-time got out of the big digger and came to see what was going on. The water was just getting deeper.

“Oh dear! This will cost us quite a bit of time and work—and I don't even know if this project will work out as was planned after all,” he commented.

“I guess I was the one who broke it—but if I had been told about it being here, it wouldn’t have happened,” Jeffery Just-in-time said.

“Well, what we need here is ideas and solutions, because really, it’s no one’s fault. Accidents and unexpected events happen, and they just help us to discover and learn new things. We don’t need to waste time finding out who’s to blame. I think everyone here is doing the best they can. Let’s just get to work finding out what we can do to change the situation for the better, shall we?” Harolt Hoowalhelp said.

Jeffery Just-in-time felt better. He was rather expecting others to be upset at him and be quick to criticise. Instead he was well thought of and complimented for the good and hard work that he had been doing.

The men all stopped work for a while to talk together with the foreman. New jobs were assigned. A team would find out more about the water pipe—where it came from and what it led to. Others were put to work drawing up new plans, as they needed to adjust their blueprints a bit. Another team got busy repairing the pipe by first of all pumping out the extra water that was pouring out, while replacing the broken piece.

“We’ve discovered what that pipe was!” said the returning team a couple hours later.

“It’s the water supply that goes down to the old little village—one of the first towns established in this part of the country. That’s why there was no record of it on the modern day blue prints of the city,” the team explained.

“That’s so interesting,” Jeffery Just-in-time said. “Makes me curious to find out more about the history of this area.”

Soon the pipe was fixed and Jeffery Just-in-time used the digger to cover it over again with dirt.

“Well, that’s all we have time for today team,” said the foreman. “You all did well! Perhaps the job we planned on doing wasn’t completed due to new factors and challenges that we faced. But I’m real pleased that you all worked together as a good team, like brothers, helping to fix the situation and not getting down about things. Even if things don’t go perfectly well, and people make mistakes, if we can be forgiving and appreciate each other’s good qualities, then that makes us winners. We need to see past the things that go wrong or differently than expected and not just try to place blame and find fault, but join together in friendship to pull out of difficult situations or problems. That’s what makes you all such a great team. I’ll see you tomorrow then to start anew on the revised plan. Good going! And have a good evening.”

With that the foreman waved goodbye and so did the others.

It had been a different day than was expected, but a good day, as each one had noticed the good in each other, and had spoken words that were helpful and uplifting.

Jeffery Just-in-time paused before walking away. He looked at each one on the team. He could think of countless mistakes that each one had made. He could remember the times that each one had in some way disappointed others, or were unable to do as good a job as was needed at different times. He thought of himself too, and all the many blunders that he'd made.

“Maybe we don't have to be perfect. Maybe we just need to focus on what is good in each other, and to be glad for the many more times that things are done well. It's easy to remember the mistakes—but perhaps that's because they don't happen as often as the good things people do, so it seems more noticeable,” Jeffery Just-in-time thought.

“I think I'd like to change that. From now I want to think and see and say the good qualities that each of my friends and teamworkers have. And I'm just going to ignore the rest, unless there is a kind and helpful word or deed I can do that would make things better and easier for them.”

With that thought Jeffery Just-in-time left, a smile on his face. He knew tomorrow would be the best day yet. Appreciating those you live with and are around—rather than fault finding and pointing out the failures—has a way of making things so much better!

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## **A Positive Help**

It had been an early start this morning for Gordie Go'n'do-it, and he was reading the newspaper while sipping his coffee.

“Ah! I love these early morning times, when everything is quiet,” he thought while pausing to look out the window. “I need this time to prepare for the day. If I ever get a late start and don't take time to pray and pause before the rush of work starts, things just don't seem to go as well.

After praying for his day and reading some passages in his Bible he also liked to read about what was going on in the country and what was happening in people's lives.

Most people wouldn't think of reading about troubles and problems and mistakes that people made would be a nice start to the day. But Gordie Go'n'do-it wasn't reading the newspaper to find fault or to think negatively about what was going on. He actually used it as his prayer primer.



He would read about something, and no matter what it was saying, he would find something good to think about it. He would begin a simple prayer stating what was positive in the situation, and thanking the Lord for something about it. Then he would say a prayer for anyone involved and what they might need.

He would tell his friends, “Those who write the papers don’t realise the good they are doing. It’s my prayer list, and I believe I can actually make a difference in people’s lives by praying for them. They may never know that I prayed, but perhaps the good effects that my prayer do will eventually come back to me, in the form of a happier town, due to my prayers!”

Some would question, “But can you really see something good in each article? What about those that tell of the unkind deeds or wrongs done by others?”

“Well,” Gordie Go’n’do-it would say, “it’s like what Jesus said to those who thought they were oh-so-good, and wondered why Jesus would even take time to talk with the less-than-perfect people. He gave the example that it’s the sick who need the doctors. So it’s the people that are having a hard time making the right decisions that probably need the prayer the most.”

“But why do you always include something good to say about them or the situation in your prayers. Why not just pray for them to do better and to stop doing the wrong things they are doing?” one friend asked him.

Gordie Go’n’do-it was a kind man, and he also knew a secret.

“The Bible says to ‘Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,’ so if I’m going to get close to the Lord and to say prayers that will really change things, then I need to start with praise. And it’s very hard to be praiseful if in my heart I’m still thinking bad and negative thoughts about a person or situation.

“Also, remember that story Jesus told about the cheating tax collector, and the Pharisee who thought so well of himself? The man who was thinking badly of others didn’t receive God’s forgiveness for his own mistakes—mistakes he seemed to forget while only remembering others wrong doings. I don’t want to be like that. I make plenty of blunders too, and anything I do good and well I know is only because Jesus is helping me,” Gordie Go’n’do-it explained.

So now on this beautiful early morning he could smile as he enjoyed this time in quiet, helping others through his positive prayers. And for some reason, every day he took time to lift others through prayer, things seem to go extra good for him!

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## **Tying Shoes**

Robert was trying to tie his shoes for the first time, but didn't quite get it right and ended up with a bit of a tangled string. In frustration he called out to his dad to show him once again how to do it right.

“Okay, son,” said Wilden Wilbeethere, “Here’s how to do it,” he said and demonstrated the method.

“Think ya got it now?” he asked his son.

Robert tried it once more and with a big grin showed his dad that he did it! It was mostly done right and was good enough for a first try.

“Good for you! You didn’t give up, did you? I’ll tell you some things just aren’t easy and you can’t win ‘em the first time around. But with that good skill of yours—the skill of not giving up—you’ll be able to learn anything you put your mind to!” Wilden Wilbeethere said to his son.

Together they walked to a large patch of grass nearby to play some ball and Wilden Wilbeethere continued to chat.

“I’ll tell you, some of the jobs we’ve got on the site aren’t a piece of cake, if you know what I mean. And there isn’t anything that I can do now that didn’t take me a good amount of effort and putting my mind and muscles to work to master the skill.”

“Really? Can you tell me about something you learned?” Robert asked his dad.

They sat down on a log and Wilden Wilbeethere began.

“You see, I’m not the fastest of the bunch nor the smartest by any means. It seems I have to work harder than most to pick up a new skill and to do what it takes others with a quick wit to learn in a short while. Perhaps it helps me understand and be patient with others when it seems it take a while to learn things. I can’t be impatient when I know it takes me time to learn things as well.” Wilden Wilbeethere said.

“Daddy, I’m glad you are patient with me when I’m trying to learn things,” Robert expressed. “It helps me to keep on going and not give up.”

“Well, I guess that’s a good thing about me taking awhile to learn new things too. It helps me react with understanding,” Wilden Wilbeethere commented.

“What was something you took a while to learn?” Robert asked.

“I wanted to learn to operate the mobile crane, as it seemed it would be more fun to sit and use gears and buttons rather than sweating it out under the sun with spades and bricks. But as it turns out it wasn’t as easy as I thought. That thing took a ton of studying and practice and lots of plain hard work until I felt I could use it capably. Nothing is really ever easy. If it seems like someone has an easier time doing whatever job they have, think again. Someone somewhere is probably looking over at you and thinking the very same thing—that you have things easier than they do.

“It’s like the shoes you learned to tie this morning; everyone in life has on their own pair of shoes. Well, not everyone wears shoes, but it’s an example, that everyone has a different lot in life and different skills, traits, abilities and difficulties as well. No one has it all smooth—not you, not me, not your mother or even your best friend. Everyone has something that is hard for them, as well as some things that are easy too—something that might be hard for others.

“It all balances out and everyone learns something that others might not have gotten to learn yet. So we can all help each other and learn from one another. But if you look at someone and think things are easy for them, maybe in some ways they are, but there’s always something, or a lot of somethings that are also tough. It’s good to put yourself in their shoes, as the expression says. Imagine what it might be like for you if you were to do, day in and day out, what they have to do—without the advantages that you have right now. It might give you a new understanding and insight. You might start to appreciate new things about them and feel yourself more eager to help even those that at first to you seemed to have all that they needed.”

Just then Robert’s friends Sally and her brother Mike came walking past. He waved and invited them to join in the ball game that was soon to start.

“Oh, that would have been great,” Sally said, “but Mike here needs me to help him run an errand. It’s safer when we go together.”

Mike was a friendly and fun guy to be around, but he also was hearing impaired, and there were times when neither he nor his sister were able to join in on games and activities, since she helped him out a lot.

“Okay then, I’ll see you around sometime,” said Robert and waved good bye.

Robert said to his dad, “I think I see more what you mean about understanding what others are experiencing, so I can be a help to them. If I’d have just thought about what I wanted, I would have been sad that I couldn’t play with them now. Also, at times I’ve wished we had a nice back yard like they do, with so many fun things to do. But when I think about how hard it must be to not be able to hear anything, and to miss out on lots of things that boys like I get to do, then I don’t feel sad for myself anymore, and instead I just want to do what I can to help them.”

“Good for you!” Wilden Wilbeethere replied. “I think you’ve got it! Now, let’s go and play some ball together. Maybe it’s just you and I right now, and we don’t have a big yard to play in at home, but we could have a good chat and hear each other! Not everyone gets that!”

Robert was glad for the fun dad that he had, and he hoped he could always remember what he’d learned that day—to be understanding of other’s needs and feelings, and not just look on the outward display or what is most noticed by others.

When they got home mother said, “Robert a letter came in the mail for you!”



Robert eagerly opened it to read,

“Dear Robert,

I’m sorry I couldn’t attend your birthday a few weeks back. I hope you weren’t too sad. I suddenly came down with the flu and am at last feeling well again. I hope to see you next week end!

--Jorge”

Robert smiled. It was good to have his question answered finally. He had wondered why Jorge never came, and hadn’t felt too happy about it. He began to think that Jorge was too busy for him and had too many toys and other friends to play with. But none of it was true. Jorge was in fact feeling very lonely, having no other brothers or sisters, and had been very uncomfortable with his sickness.

Robert thought about what it must have been like, and planned to write a letter back to encourage his friend, until he could see him again.

“Even though he lives in the nicest house around, it doesn’t mean he has all that he needs. Everyone needs love and friendship. I’ll remember that next time!” Robert thought.

## **At the Docks**

It started off as a sunny day down at the docks. Today was the day when Tom Truckalong would load new building materials on to his truck that came in by ship. These materials would be taken to the construction crew's large company warehouse.

It was just one of the jobs he had to do, though he liked seeing the big ships and enjoyed the smell of sea air. Sometimes he'd look out over the blue water that stretched out as far as his eyes could see and imagine what it must be like for the sailors on their oftentimes long voyages.

Well, at least the trips didn't take nearly as long as they did many years ago, before the invention of modern means of transportation, and diesel and petrol powered engines.

Tom Truckalong's thoughts were brought back to the present when he heard the honking of horns and the various noises of the loading zone at the docks. It was his turn next, to put his truck in position for the container to be lowered on to it. He was about to pull up when he heard a shout to stop. Someone was drawing attention to something that lay on the ground in front of him, right where he was about to drive.

A pair of glasses had fallen off someone and on the ground and would have been smashed by his trucks' wheels if he hadn't stopped in time. A grateful dock worker retrieved them from the thoughtful man who had spotted them. His glasses would have been sorely missed that day, if he had tried to carry on his work without them, and most likely would have caused an accident at this bustling place of heavy loads and moving vehicles. It wasn't a place to relax and ignore the surrounding activity.

“Thank you so very much! I just noticed that they were missing from my pocket, as I was wearing my sunglasses, but now needed to put my regular glasses on. No one would have missed or noticed if they had gotten driven over—well, not yet! See, I'm the next crane driver. Without these I couldn't have done the job well at all. Because you called for a halt to show thoughtfulness to whoever was the owner of the glasses, and because Tom Truckalong cared enough to stop and find out what the problem was—even if it made him have to wait longer to get on his way, it ended up saving you all time. Instead of Tom Truckalong waiting a minute while the glasses were given to me, he would have been waiting until another crane driver could have been found to replace me—as I wouldn't have been able to see well enough to do the job.” The crane driver explained, and made his way to operate the machine that would load up Tom Truckalong truck.

The man, whose name was Nate, who had returned the crane drivers glasses to him said to Tom Truckalong, while standing outside of his truck's window:

“I just looked at those glasses on the pavement and thought, ‘Now what if I had just lost them—it would cause quite a disruption and expense to me.’ When I see someone that seems to be needing help, or there is a problem that needs fixing, it helps me to trade places with that person—all in my mind. I pretend just for a moment that it is me, and see how I would feel if I were in their place. Then almost instantly I seemed to know what to do! If it’s something that I would appreciate others doing for me if I were in their place, then I figure there’s a good chance that they would like it too, and then I just do it. I try not to hesitate too long, but just jump in and do what seems like the best and most kind response. If I wait around thinking about it, trying to decide if I should do it or not, often times I’ll choose to not do anything about it, and the chance is missed, and the person or situation isn’t helped.”

Tom Truckalong asked, “But what if you think someone would appreciate something—but then when you do it, they aren’t so pleased about it after all, because they didn’t understand that you were only trying to help, or something about what you do bothers

them. Then what do you do? Wouldn't that make you not want to try again next time? Sometimes I'm afraid of people's reactions."

"Well," Nate added. "The times that good—genuine good, real humble and helpful actions actually bother someone, is pretty rare. We can't let the fear of what people might say to us, stop us from sharing our time and care with those in need. What if you were walking along carrying a heavy load, and someone was walking nearby that could help you. What would you rather—that they try to imagine what you were in need of and then jump in to help you, or would you like them to pause and worry that you won't like the help? If what you are doing is done in a kind and gentle, humble and truly helpful way, without any self-pleasing or selfish intentions, then most of the time most people will not only be grateful for it, but will in turn do something that has a good effect on your life as well."

Tom Truckalong thought about it. "You know it's true. Most of the time we go around thinking about ourselves and what we want. But if we all made the effort to think about others more, I think we'd all find ourselves and our homes and our families and our towns a whole lot happier!"

"Okay, see you then!" Nate said, as he waved.

Tom Truckalong made sure his load was secure and loaded on properly, then waved to the crane driver and was off on his way to the warehouse. Just then his phone rang. “Hello, I’m from the bed and table company, and I wanted to let you know about this great deal we are having this weekend....” It was a phone sales man.

Tom Truckalong really wasn’t in the mood to be listening to an advertisement, and he had lots to do. But before he hung up the phone he decided to put into practice what he had just learned.

He answered kindly and said, “Thanks for calling, I’m sure you are doing a great job and have wonderful furniture to offer. I’ll keep your company in mind the next time I need something. I’m about to drive now and will need to turn off the phone for safety. I hope you have a good day and great success with your week end sale!”

It didn’t take that much time to respond in the way he would have liked someone to talk with him, if his job had been to make sales calls. It made Tom Truckalong feel a heap better just thinking, even for a moment, about what someone else was feeling and what they would appreciate. The “Thank you. Have a good day too!” that he heard from the pleasantly surprised sales man on the other end of the phone felt good. He’d try to do it more often.

### **Right words at the right time**

It felt like one of those days when Kiran Kontolictuz wished he was comfortably still sleeping in his bed. It wasn't because he was tired or feeling sick, but things just weren't going well. He was trying to keep a smile on his face when it seemed people kept bumping into him or stepping on his toes, and when his coffee spilled on his shirt for the second time he chose to whistle a cheery tune. But by the time he found out that his tyre on his car was flat when he wanted to go get some lunch at his break, and that his work overseer spoke grumpily to him, telling him that he needed to do better at his work, he just felt like crumbling.

Just then as he was staring towards the ground he heard children's voices and looked up to see children waving and smiling. He'd never seen that boy and his young sister before, but they seemed rather glad to see him. Their mother was close beside pushing the baby.

On the little family walked after that brief encounter. They had come to see the workmen from a distance, and spotted Kiran Kontolictuz looking rather glum as they walked on down the path.

These children had a gift for noticing when people were in need of encouragement. They didn't do much, and it had only taken a second of time, but the effect it had on Kiran Kontolictuz was amazing.

“I was feeling like I was getting all the bad things happening to me all in one day, but the moment someone smile and seemed to notice me—and not just notice me but acted like they cared about me and thought I was a good workman, it made my heart smile.” He mused, amazed that it takes so little time and effort to help cheer someone's day.

Since he could no longer drive in his car to get his lunch, until he had time to change the tyre, he decided to just sit there in his car and eat what he had brought for his lunch. The only reason he was planning on driving anywhere at his lunch break was to see if it would make him feel better to get away from things a bit. But now he didn't need to. Happiness was in his heart and a smile on his face. Things weren't as bad as his mind was starting to make him believe.

Then he chose to pass on the favour to another. He decided that the first person he saw he would give them a bit of encouragement, in whatever way would be best.



As he was about to bite into his apple he spotted a business man obviously late for some “lunch meeting” or something. He was half running half walking and it was awkward with his overstuffed briefcase, probably containing all that he would need for the appointment.

“I wish my car was up and running—I could give him a lift. Well, at least I can give him a lift of spirit.”

“Good day to you!” he called out. “I’m sure you’ll do just great at what you are needing to do!”

The surprised man turned and then smiled and nodded before hurrying on his way.

Kiran Kontolictuz wondered what good that would do, but at least he had kept his promise and passed on a word of encouragement to someone. His break was over all too soon, and it was time to face the worksite again. But somehow he felt better, and had a new secret plan.

“If a smile, a kind word and thoughtful acknowledgement changed me from feeling down to feeling cheerful and like I could cope with the day, I’m sure it could change others. I’m going to see what I can do to perk things up by encouraging those I work with all I can, no matter what is happening.”

So with his secret plan, Kiran Kontolictuz headed off to begin the rest of the day's toil.

He got his first chance to see what a good word could do when he saw his worksite overseer heading his way.

"Uh, oh, here comes Mr. ..." Kiran Kontolictuz was beginning to think, but then stopped himself, stood up straight and put on a friendly smile.

"Hi, Sir. It's good to know that we have someone who is concerned about the job being done well overseeing it. I'll remember those points you mentioned this morning and try to up the quality of my work. God bless you!" Kiran Kontolictuz said.

The worksite overseer was taken back and finally found the words to say.

"Uh, thank you. That's the only kind word I've heard in weeks. I'm glad to have you on the team. Even though I made some comments to you this morning about the improvement that I thought was needed in your work, that doesn't at all mean that you aren't a top-notch worker. I appreciate all you do and I know I can count on you." The worksite overseer said.

Now it was Kiran Kontolictuz's turn to be surprised.

“Thank you, Sir, that means a lot to me. Thank you. I’ll continue to do my best.”

With both men feeling the amazing boost and lift of heart and spirit that simply and kind word and sincere appreciation can bring, there was already a noticeable change on the site. The atmosphere on the worksite and attitudes of those working improved, and more work got accomplished as a result.

Kiran Kontolictuz was able to bring a hearty smile to several of the others on the team. And at last at a tired Kiran Kontolictuz was relieved from his work for the day to go home—if he could get his tyre fixed that is.

The timing however was amazing. Just as he was heading to the parking lot the very same business man was again walking past on the side walk—this time however at a more relaxed pace.

Kiran Kontolictuz recognized him, and the businessman remembered the kind word that had been spoken and decided to come over and chat. When he found out that Kiran Kontolictuz’s tyre was flat he offered to lend him hand.

“I used to be a mechanic—well, I sort of still am, just in my spare time now, which seems to be a lot less than it used to be!” said the business man.

“I have just what is needed in my car over at the other side of the lot. Just give me a second and I’ll be right back.”

In about five minutes the man was back and Kiran Kontolictuz and he changed the tyre replacing it with the spare that Kiran Kontolictuz always kept in the trunk of the car.

“I’ll get that one fixed for you, if you like, and return it to you. Where to do you live? I’ll drop it off to you in a couple of days.” Offered the businessman.

Kiran Kontolictuz was quite surprised at what a little kind word spoken at just the right time could do. “Thank you so very much. I so very appreciate it. You have a good heart!” Kiran Kontolictuz complimented the businessman-mechanic.

“Well, I guess we both best be going. It’s been a long day for the both of us, but I’m glad we met and thanks again for your kind help with the tyre.” Kiran Kontolictuz said.

“And thank you too,” said the business man. “You noticed that I was struggling and running late and knew just what to say to encourage me earlier on today. The fact that you took time to think about me and give me a boost with kind words made all the difference to my day. As a result I was able to relax and enjoy the day rather than been so stressed and worried, and getting a headache like I usually do on days like today.

See, because I felt better—due to your well-timed words of encouragement, that’s why I was able to be a help to you now. So really, it’s you who helped me, and helped make this possible. It probably didn’t seem to you like it did much of anything when you chose to speak a kind word to me, but I’m glad we met again so I could let you know the difference it did make.” The businessman shared.

Kiran Kontolictuz was amazed that such a small word of encouragement could have such an effect.

“This is a power tool of progress that brings more good than we realise—this tool of kind words well spoken. A little encouragement can go such a long way and affect so many other things in ours and other’s lives,” Kiran Kontolictuz pondered.

The men shook hands and Kiran Kontolictuz wrote out his street address for the businessman to know where to drop the fixed tyre off.

“Thanks again! Have a good evening!” Kiran Kontolictuz said, as he hopped in his now good-to-go car, and smiled as he drove on home. The day had been good after all. Kind words and thoughtfulness made the positive difference.

## **Splash City**

It was the Sunday the children had all been looking forward to for a long time! Uncle Larry Laughinglad was visiting and offered to take his sister and her children to the newly opened waterpark.

“Yea! We’re going to ‘Splash City’ today!” they exclaimed, and as soon as possible they were ready and in the car to pray for their outing.

“Do you have all that you need?” Larry Laughinglad asked before beginning the drive. He liked to have a time to pause before leaving to go anywhere to see if anything had been forgotten.

“Oh, I forgot my sun hat!” Cherille, five years old, said. “It must have fallen off my head when I was putting on my shoes.

Her mother helped her go back into the house and find it.

“Thank you mummy for helping me,” she said.

“It was great that you remembered—and stopped to think about what might be missing, just like Daddy asked. It’s a great help to us when you do your part to help take care of yourself, and keep yourself safe and healthy! Good for you.” Mum encouraged her girl.

Cherille had a big grin on her face. It felt good to have her efforts appreciated. It was a great way to start a fun excursion day. If instead someone had spoken unkindly and grumbled to her about forgetting her hat—rather than commending her for remembering and taking action on it—it would have made things a whole lot less fun.

“Thanks for driving us there!” Baron said to his uncle as they pulled out of the driveway.

“I’m glad to do it! –Especially with such a great team in the car as you all. We’re going to have one awesome day!” Larry Laughinglad exclaimed.

“Uncle Larry, do you like to swim?” Larry Laughinglad’s nephew Toddy asked. “Didn’t you win a medal one time for being the fastest swimmer at a completion? Mummy told us about that, as it happened when you both were teens, is that right?”

“Ah, yes,” Larry Laughinglad remembered. “Well, I wasn’t always fast or good—at anything it seemed. But then something changed one summer when I was 14 years old.

“I my friend’s cousin, Harley, who was a very good swimmer and was quite a bit older than me, came for a visit, and stayed for a few weeks.

“Often we spent our time down by the river and had lots of time swimming and canoeing. One day we were about to have a race in the water when Harley, turned to me and said something that I’ve remembered for a long time. He knew that I would probably be the slowest swimmer, and there was a good chance I would feel bad about it.

“ ‘You know, Larry, it’s not how fast or good someone is at things that counts—but it’s how they react to things. Some people can seem to be real skilled, but then still act grumpy or unkind to others when the slightest thing goes wrong. A true winner keeps his head and his heart up, no matter how they seem to fare. And another tip to remember is, with a good deal of practice, perseverance and prayer, anyone can learn just about anything—and do it quite capably.’ Harley said to me right before the count off.

“ ‘One-two-three-Go!’ and the water race was on. We swam with all our might, and as was expected I was the last one to reach the goal. But with the smile on Harley’s face as he looked at me, I was able to put one on mine too.



“ ‘Good going!’ he said. You’re getting the hang of it—being a winner is being a grinner, no matter what! And one day, if you choose to also get the hang of swimming, I know you’ll do great at that too!’ Harley encouraged.

“So with my heart fortified with a bit more courage and joy I chose to join a swimming team to enhance my skill. My scheduled time learning with the team wasn’t the only time I worked on my swimming. It seemed it was about all I did for the next two years and a bit more.

“I swam and exercised in other ways at any chance I got. Then when I found out that there was going to be statewide competition for the fastest swimmer, I took the plunge to sign up for it. And boy did I work hard on it day after day.

“I wanted to win—but I didn’t know if it really was possible. But because I’d learned that other and most important skill of taking the outcome of things bravely and cheerful, then I knew it wouldn’t really bother me that much if I lost. I would be a winner either way—either I’d win the medal, or I’d win at staying fit and working towards a goal of trying something anyway, and staying positive even if I didn’t do as well as someone else.

“When it was announced that I was the winner many people who knew me from before were real surprised—but not Harley, who happened to be in town for the race. I didn’t even know he was there, but when I was heading to get on my bicycle, holding my trophy, to return to the place I was staying in, there he was, ready to shake my hand.

“ ‘Good to see you again! I’m so glad for you! I tried for that race several years ago too—and well, I didn’t win. But I still had fun. I’m glad you got the prize! You worked hard for that!’” Harley commended him.

“ ‘Harley’!” I said “Good to see you too! But I think you are mistaken—you did win a prize! This medal here was only possible, because of your words of encouragement to me that summer a few years ago. Thanks for giving me the tips. I’m here today because of you.’” I told him.

“So that’s the story of the swimming contest and how affective, motivating and life-changing words of encouragement are. Well, here we are at ‘Splash City’. Let’s pray for safety, keep an eye on each other, and have a good time!” Larry Laughinglad said.

A good time was had by all, and even Cherille, with the encouragement of her family, was able to start learning some new swimming tricks that she hadn't felt capable of doing before.

As they got in the car to leave they stopped to pause and think if anything had been forgotten.

"I think there is one thing we forgot," Baron said, with a bit of a smile, and whispered something to his brother Toddy, who nodded in agreement.

"Well, what is it?" Mother asked, curious what the boys were thinking.

"We'd like to go and thank those at Splash City who work to keep it clean and safe. May we tell them thank you for the good job they do?" said the boys.

"I have an idea," said mum, pulling out a piece of paper and pen from her purse. "Why don't you tell me what you'd like to say to them, and I'll write it down here. We can then post in on the corkboard of office where they enter. The workers and also those who come to swim will get to see it then!"

"Good idea,' Larry Laughinglad agreed.

And so the little note of appreciation was written and posted:

“Thank you, all of you who work at Splash City, to keep it safe and clean and fun for all of us. You are doing a good job!”

It felt good to do that, and there was a smile and a wave from the secretary and greeting woman who saw the note. The children waved good-bye—and were looking forward to their next visit.

“Wait! Here’s something for you!” they heard a woman’s voice calling, before they got in their car.

“I had a ticket to give away today, for a family to come to Splash City for one day for free. I decided, after seeing your thoughtfulness in writing that note, and seeing how much your family enjoyed your time, that I would give it to you!” The smiling lady said, and their mother took the ticket with appreciation and placed it in her purse.

“Hmmm,” mum thought. “If I hadn’t taken that piece of paper out of here to write words of encouragement and appreciation on it, I might not have been putting in this piece of paper—this ticket. Words of kindness come back in all kinds of ways.”

## **Knock, knock!**

*Knock, knock!*

It was Darin Dillygint-deedz coming to check on his neighbour.

“Come in,” said Paul, who showed Darin Dillygint-deedz the way down the hallway to the room that Trover was resting in.

“Thanking for coming,” Paul, Trover’s much older brother, said to Darin Dillygint-deedz. “It means a lot to us.”

“Hi, Trover!” Darin Dillygint-deedz said as he popped his head into the room.

Trover had been unable to get out and around for some time, and it seemed like it would take forever until he would be able to walk properly again. His leg had been hurt in a fall, and wasn’t healing as fast as he would have liked. It was nice to have someone visit.

“I brought you something, Trover,” Darin Dillygint-deedz said and opened a small bag, pulling out a little velvet box.

“It’s something I always keep on the table beside my bed. Take a look.”

Trover opened the box and found it was filled with little colourful cards, and on each card was written a verse from the Bible. The box was also a music box and could be wound up to play a beautiful tune.

Darin Dillygint-deedz said, “I like to pick a few and read them when I wake up in the morning, or before I go to sleep, and sometimes just for fun, or if I get hurt or sick. Then I sometimes wind it up and play the music while I close my eyes and think about the words that I’ve just read on the coloured card. It makes me realise that I’m never alone, and that Jesus is right with me wherever I am.

“I wanted you to enjoy them for this time while you are here getting some extra rest. Maybe you can’t be as active right now as your friends perhaps can be, but there may be things that you get to do that they won’t have the time for right now.”

Trover looked up curiously and said, “Really? Like what?”

Darin Dillygint-deedz explained: “Well, when you are grown, there will be a lot of things expected of you—you’ll need to take care of yourself and help provide for others as well, maybe even have a family of your own one day.

“One way you can handle all that will come your way is through doing some good workout, exercise and growing muscles—not the kind on your body, but the muscles of your heart and mind and spirit.

“Right now, though it looks like you are just resting, it can be the perfect time to build muscles—muscles of faith, prayer, confidence in God’s care, and thinking through some thoughts and ideas and plans for your life too. Maybe you can’t do much now, but there is plenty you can do to prepare for the time when you will need to do a whole lot.”

Trover nestled comfortably on the pile of pillows that Paul had set him up with, while listening to the interesting things his visitor had to say.

Darin Dillygint-deedz continued, “Just running around and playing games, and meeting with friends and having a good time isn’t what will make you a strong and capable man one day. But today, here, right now, you can get ready.

“You can read books that build your muscles of faith. You can read these faith-building promises from the Bible and memorize them, and they will be as guidance that you’ll think of at just the right times in your life when you are wondering what to do.

“You can pray for others and see answers to prayer occur. That will be just as good or even better than if you were up and around doing all those great things! –Except that you have asked Jesus to do it for you, and He knows how to do things just right. Your prayers will be like workmen that can do things that you can’t do. That can be one of the best skills and habits you can acquire for a happy and well-lived life.”

Trover was starting to feel better already, and when Paul showed up with a warm drink for him he was able to smile—one of the rare times he had smiled since his accident.

Someone showing some outgoing concern for him had made all the difference. Darin Dillygint-deedz didn’t have to come by to visit. It wasn’t on his to do list of things he was required to do. But Jesus’ instruction to “love your neighbour” made it a priority for Darin Dillygint-deedz to do so, and it made all the difference to Trover.

Trover’s health began to improve day-by-day from that time on.

A few weeks later he was able to get around fairly well, and he hobbled to his neighbour’s house to do something kind for Darin Dillygint-deedz. It wasn’t a big thing, but it was thoughtful.



Darin Dillygint-deedz had been gone for three days already to work on a big construction job in another city. He was to be gone for a week. However, it was the day before the garbage trucks came to pick up the trash on their street. Darin Dillygint-deedz wasn't there and his trash would have been missed.

Trover limped as well as he could and placed the bins on the curb just like they were meant to be placed, and then went back to sit down on his favourite livingroom couch. It had taken some effort to do that deed, but after all, Darin Dillygint-deedz was kind enough to care about him. It was a good way to live, Trover thought.

Trover got an idea to write a storybook. It would be called, "The Crippled Boy Who Changed a Country." Well, Trover wasn't crippled, but it wasn't easy to get around yet, and he wanted to tell everyone who read his book, how to make things in the country better.

The story was about how a bit more caring for others—and not just thinking about nice things to do, but putting kindness into action—could eventually make the place they live so much better.

Trover had learned a lot since his accident, and he wanted to express it through this story. He had the time to write stories now, and was enjoying it. Perhaps his older brother Paul, who was good at drawing, could even add some pictures to the story. It would make a fun project to work together on.

Of course sitting around writing a story about caring and helping each other wasn't good enough—Trover realised that he needed to do his part to be the example of what he wanted people to start doing. Darin Dillygint-deedz had showed kindness and concern for him, and now he wanted to show it to others.

As he glanced out the window and saw the neatly placed trash bin that he'd put out for Darin Dillygint-deedz, it made him smile. He was doing it! He was showing thoughtfulness and concern in whatever way he could. —And he hoped it would catch on until many others were doing the same kinds of things for others—whatever they saw needed to be done, and were helping others because they cared and wanted to show genuine concern.

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## **Encountering Problems**

The treads were stuck or jammed or something, on the bulldozer. Darin Dillygint-deedz couldn't quite figure out the problem. The other workmen nearby came to look too, but didn't know what to do. This was stopping them from continuing on the project. It seemed to be a tough fix-it job. When things like this happened, they knew who to call on.

Kiran Kontolictuz was used to being called on for the “really hard jobs.” He was someone who didn't mind problems—whether it was a broken down bulldozer, or a flat tire, or a piece of equipment that wouldn't work properly, or even a person who wasn't making things easy and seemed to be upsetting things.

Kiran Kontolictuz came over to take a look at the bulldozer. “You know why I like to encounter problems?” he asked. The others looked at him, puzzled. It was the last thing they liked to have happen to them. Often when a problem came up, most of the time it made people want to walk the other way, and do things that were easy—but not Kiran Kontolictuz.

He said, “I like facing things that go wrong, because I then get to discover something new I never realized before, and then I’m able to help others even more with the extra knowledge and experience gained through it.”

“Doesn’t that make it hard for you to get jobs done, if things are always going wrong?” Darin Dillygint-deedz asked. He didn’t want these problems causing his job to go so slow or for him have to stop for awhile. He wanted it done right, and well, and right away!

“Well,” Kiran Kontolictuz responded. “If what you are trying to do, or your goal each day, is only to get things done, then it could be rather upsetting to have things that are like red lights or brakes that stop you from making steady progress. But if you see things differently, that each day has more to it than doing things, and you realise that you are to most of all learn things, then even a problem is part of your accomplishing that—since it’s helping you to learn something.”

Kiran Kontolictuz continued to look at the treads, and then stopped for a word of prayer. In an instant the Lord showed him what the problem was. There was a rock wedged in the tread, stopping it from moving easily. He cleared out the rock that was jamming things up.

Darin Dillygint-deedz could now continue with the job, but stopped first to summarise what he'd just learned. "I see! When we are using our strength and thoughts to focus on and worry about a problem, wishing it would go away so that things would be nice and easy, then it's hard for us to find solutions. If instead we think of a problem as something positive and good, in that it will help us to learn something new, and we pray for the answers, we'll find a solution quicker."

"That's right!" Kiran Kontolictuz agreed. "If we focus on the good that can come out of the difficulty, and ask the Lord for the solution, the trouble will be over sooner, and we'll be on to doing new things, and making faster progress again."

"Brrrrrrrrmmmm!" the motor roared, and off Darin Dillygint-deedz happily continued with his big job for the day.

## The Last Coins

Sammy Smilesine was taking a break from work. He was in charge of using the large digger. The basement was starting to take shape—at least the hole for it. He went to eat his snack on the park bench. The thought of looking at the trees, listening to the gentle song of the birds, and enjoying the pretty fountain of water, relaxed him. He'd had enough loudness for one morning. The sound of the digger was anything but relaxing.

But on his way his head turned to see something he really wished he hadn't. There was a sign saying: Come and see my new video! It's the craziest thing you ever saw!

It was hard to resist. He wanted some quiet moments, and knew that to have a nice day, and to stay happy and friendly with the others on the team, he needed to have some time with Jesus out in nature. But it started to get him interested. Well, that's what the sign was trying to do.

He used the last coins he had—that was going to be for a snack with a friend at the end of the day. He paid to go in and see what this was all about. But as soon as the video started, he knew he wasn't enjoying it.

It was just full of foolishness, dangerous ideas, unkind deeds, ugly pictures, and things that made him feel very sad his heart. He walked out disgusted.

“Why would someone spend so much time and money on making something terrible like that? It was definitely not of the Lord! I feel very sad I watched it.” Sammy Smilesine thought.

But now his time was spent, and so was his “fun time” money. He didn’t have time now for the park, and he was feeling grumpy from the show he’d seen.

“I’m going to be wiser now,” he determined. “The next time there is a fancy sign, and something that seems to be fun, I’ll pray before I do it. I’m sure the Lord would have warned me. Actually, He told me this morning to take my break in the park. I should have followed through and done that, no matter what tried to get me distracted.”

As he walked back his digger, Charley Churrusting came up to him asking,

“So where shall we go later for our ‘after work snack-and-friendship time’?”

Sammy Smilesine, who almost always was smiling, was looking down sadly. He didn’t know what to say.

“What’s wrong?” wondered Charley Churrusting. “Are you okay?”

“Well, it’s just that I made a silly mistake. I spent the money for our snack later on something that wasn’t good at all. I really want to still have our time together though.”

Being the faithful friend and encouragement that Charley Churrusting was, he said, “That’s okay. I’ve done that before. It helped me learn to keep my ears open to what the Lord wants to tell me, and to make Him happy in all that I do. I’m always happier that way. I know that feeling you have now in your heart when you’ve heard or seen or said or done something that wasn’t God’s happy, loving, pleasant way. How about for our time together, we go to the park. We can just look at the beauty around, and enjoy the sounds of nature. We don’t have to buy a snack. We can still have fun!”

“You’re such a good friend to me!” Sammy Smilesine said. “That’s what I’d wanted to do before. I can have another chance now. That will be great!”

“Okay! See you then!” Charley Churrusting said with a wave, as he went off to drive the dump truck’s next load off the work site.



He whistled while he worked. They were using the dirt from the dug out hole to fill up a landfill—a place where the garbage trucks dump the trash each week. They were covering it up with the new dirt.

“Hmm, that’s an interesting thought,” he mused. “I guess the unpleasant things from the Enemy, that are in the world—or that even just come into our thoughts—are like the trash. Our mind is like a big hole, waiting for something to fill it up. If we let the Enemy fill it, he’ll just give us trashy thoughts and ideas, and stinky things. But this new load of dirt that I’m bringing is like Jesus’ Word and thoughts. He can fill us up and make us into something useful. When this landfill is covered in good dirt, plants, grass, flowers and everything nice can be grown on it. It will be a nice park one day.”

With the hard work done for the day, Charley Churrusting parked the dump truck, and strolled over to meet his friend. Just then something caught his eye—a coin...no, a few coins. “Must have dropped from someone’s pocket a while ago while they ran and played. Or maybe Jesus just put them here for us? Wow!”

Noticing Sammy Smileshire hadn’t arrived yet, he wanted to surprise him. He ran quickly over to the snack stand at the entrance of the park and got something for the two of them.

“Where did you get that?” said Sammy Smilesine, when he arrived.

“A miracle!” Charley Churrusting told the story. And as they ate it, the most beautiful bird came and sat in the tree and sang them its song. Sammy Smilesine felt happy and warm inside. “Jesus, you are really cheering us up! Thank You!” he said.

“You know, I was thinking,” added Charley Churrusting, “Jesus is like the most beautiful light you’ve ever seen—and I just love light—lights of all kinds. The morning sunrise, the warm, golden late afternoon sunlight, a flashlight walk at night with the bright stars shining, coloured lights on a Christmas tree, the full silvery moon, a soft lamp for a bedtime story, a shiny crystal chandelier—those are some of my favourite. And Jesus is the light of the world—better and brighter and more beautiful than any light on Earth. ‘In Him is no darkness at all.’” Charley Churrusting remembered the Bible verse.

“Jesus just makes me feel great! I have so much more energy, fun, and good ideas when I think His thoughts and remember His love,” said Sammy Smilesine.

After taking some time to praise the Lord together, they felt encouraged and strong again—ready for a happy work day the next day.

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## Sketch Pad

It was his day off, and Marrvin Merryglad was particularly excited. It was the day that he had planned for so long, with his friends Joey and Marty.

Looking at the map closely, to get the right idea of just how to get to the waterfall, the team of three were ready to get hiking.

Joey called out “Everyone have their water, hat, snacks, and sketch books, pens and pencils?” They all nodded.

An interest in art was something they had in common. Though they all worked at different jobs--Marrvin Merryglad worked with the bobcat at the construction site, Marty was a bus driver, and Joey worked at the bank--they all liked to draw.

Today they wanted to capture, in art, some of the beauties that they would see up on the mountain—trees, plants, the waterfall, maybe even some animals, if they were quiet enough.

“It’s hard work getting to the top!” Joey exclaimed, as they hiked up the steep and rocky mountain pathway. Since each of them mostly sat down at their jobs, the exercise took a bit of effort, but was so good for them.

“It may be hard”, Marrvin Merryglad said, “but it’s sure a lot more fun than driving a noisy bobcat—and much better for us too!”

The team stopped for a rest and snack, then pulled out their sketch pads.

“What are you going to draw?” Joey asked his friends.

Marrvin Merryglad decided on a wild mountain flower, with a bee on it. Marty chose the distant mountain. And Joey thought he’d sketch the nearby sparkling brook of rippling water, where a bird or two would stop by for a little splash, or perhaps to find bugs.

After spending about an hour, resting, talking and drawing, they set off again. The next stop was the large, and breathtaking mountain waterfall.

The excited team took off their shoes and socks and waded in the parts of the pool they could reach.

“This was certainly worth it!” Marrvin Merryglad said. “It was hard work climbing, but it’s so beautiful here.”

“And quiet too! Away from the city sounds, noisy traffic, and polluted air,” said Marty, glad to not be driving a bus that day.

All of them wanted to add the sight to their sketch pads. They drew the waterfall, each in their own way, as best as they could, while thanking the Lord for creating such a wonderful place--and hoped to come back again as soon as possible.

Somehow the next day, even though their jobs involved noise and not as much beauty as they had seen together on the mountain, their work seemed not as hard. They felt refreshed, and the memories in their minds of the gorgeous nature, made them feel happy. Their bodies were stronger too, and they felt healthy from the vigorous climb.

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