

SMALL MIRACLES

By

Grand-dad Watson

(Or how Phoebe became the good Samaritan)

It had been one of those long summer days, although a brisk cool sea breeze had now begun to blow. Phoebe was looking out of the lounge room window observing from the sofa the calm glimmering waters of the bay. She had been home all day, a little bored. Phoebe had played with her sister and brothers and helped mum clean the house and now was waiting for dad to come home. But that would be in a couple of hours' time. So what to do?

Kylie, her mum, ever so graceful and forever smiling which produced a charming countenance, came into the room. Phoebe spun round, "Mum," she began. "I've been inside all day and it's such a nice one, can I go for a walk?"

Kylie looked at Phoebe, her blue eyes pleading. She sensed that she was indeed bored and as she had been such a well-behaved little girl she thought she should be rewarded.

"I can't leave Elijah and the others at the moment," she replied tenderly. "Can you be trusted to go walking by yourself?" She asked in her soothing voice.

"Of course I can mother. I'm a big girl now, well...anyway getting bigger. I'm not so little even though grandad keeps on calling me 'Princess Phoebe'."

Her mother chuckled, "Well, that's granddad for you. But if I let you go will you keep to the path and come back very soon?"

Phoebe jumped from the sofa excited. "Of course I will mother." Her fair wavy hair bouncing as she did so.

"Well," began Kylie, "It's getting a little breezy so I think you should put a coat on and even though it will be tea before long, I think you should take some cake and a bottle of cordial."

"Thank you. Cream cake?" she asked.

Kylie chuckled again. "Of course. What else?"

So Phoebe's mother busied herself wrapping a piece of cake in a little plastic box and filling a container with lemonade freshly made from the lemons she and Phoebe's father, Francis, had grown.

Phoebe was ready to hit the road...but first! “Now your coat,” said mum, placing a warm, blue coat with a big zip up the middle on Phoebe.

“Now you are ready,” she said viewing her little girl with admiration. “Now do as I’ve said, keep to the paths and come back within half an hour.”

“Very well mum,” promised Phoebe. “Perhaps I will see granddad in his old car. After all, he promised to call soon and give me a ride in it.”

“He will, he will. Now do as you are told and run along.”

Out the door, Phoebe went, through the gate and carefully crossed the road. Her heart was light and her soul was merry, but mother was right; it was getting a little chilly and this coat will keep her warm. Good mother. Always right!

Phoebe skipped along without a care in the world, thinking of what mum would have for tea that night and looking forward to the return of her dad who worked at the Hobart Council.

Phoebe was a happy little lass. She had her friends and her family, a good bed and plenty to eat. What more could a girl want? Perhaps adventure? Meeting fairies, discovering a treasure of lollies and cream cakes, finding that teddy bears really do come alive when no one is watching. and oh...there was so much to do, but for the time being all that could wait, for Phoebe was going for her walk.

She had gone ten minutes when she heard some sobbing, so she stopped and listened. The sobbing was coming from the foreshore, so she turned around and walked in that direction. There she saw a beautiful little girl with flaxen hair and deep blue eyes. Her hair curled down to her shoulders and her skin was as though it was made from peaches. Her lips were apple red, but she was crying. Phoebe wondered why such a beautiful creature would have anything to cry about. The girl, sensing that someone was near, stopped sobbing and through tear-streaked eyes looked at Phoebe.

Phoebe’s forehead wrinkled with concern, ““What is the matter little girl, why are you crying?”

“I...I...am hungry. I have not eaten for many hours. I am so hungry that my stomach hurts, she said.

“But why are you hungry? Where is your mummy and daddy? Why are you not with them?”

“My daddy has gone away and mummy is not home and I don’t know when she will return. She did not feed me when she left this morning. Please have you got anything to eat?” she pleaded.



Phoebe thought of her cream cake. She took it out of her box and showed it to the girl. But no, that is hers and oh, how she loved cream cake! It was her favourite! Should she give it to the little girl? No, it was hers and it was not her fault the little girl is not with her mummy and daddy.

Phoebe saw the girl's eyes look dreamily at the piece of cake she held. *Well, she thought, if I give this cake to the little girl, when I return home mum will give me another one and I will be home soon.*

"Here little girl, take my cake."

The little girl gasped with delight and within an instant she had taken it from Phoebe's hand and gulped it down heartily. "Thank you, thank you," she said, turned and went away.

Well, I still have my drink and coat, thought Phoebe and continued with her walk.

Further down the path she came across a grubby little boy. Phoebe stopped and looked at him and thought, *how dirty*". *Thank goodness I am not like that.* The boy spoke, "Hello," he said to Phoebe.

"Hello," replied Phoebe reluctantly as she did not really want to know such a grubby little urchin.

The boy was a little older than Phoebe and had brown hair with big brown round eyes within what could be said, a pleasant face. But his little white arms were bare and skinny and clearly he was shivering.

The boy is cold, thought Phoebe. "Why are you cold?" asked Phoebe.

The boy's face was sad and in a pathetic little voice, he replied, "I am cold because my clothes are worn out and thus thin and this sea breeze is making me shiver and now my teeth are clattering."

“But why are you not home?” asked Phoebe, which was a fair enough question.

“Home? What is that? I run away because my parents beat me after they have too much to drink and now I am alone and cold.”

Phoebe watched the small boy shiver some more. She felt every so sorry for him. *That could be me*, her young mind surmised, *but for the Grace of God providing me with parents who love me.*

Moved, Phoebe took off her coat and as she did so, began to shiver herself as the wind had got up quite a bit.

“Here little boy, take my coat. You need it more than I do. When I return home mother will find me another to put on.”

The boy looked with wonder, first at Phoebe then at the beautiful coat that he knew would keep him warm. His thin bare arm stretched to receive it and with a smile, Phoebe passed the coat on to him. Immediately the little child placed on the coat and soon stopped his shivering.

“Thank you, thank you,” he said and was gone.

Phoebe had walked enough; it was time to turn around. She was now feeling hungry and was quite cold. *Soon be home*, she thought. *Perhaps I should have my drink; lemonade one of my favourites.*

She stopped and unwound the top of the container.

“Little girl,” someone said. She looked up and saw a teenager in front of her. Phoebe eyed him with suspicion. *What did this youth want? Probably trouble*, she thought. *I should be careful. Youths are notorious for being naughty.*

“Yes?” Phoebe said. “Be quick, I cannot stop, mummy is expecting me.”

Phoebe looked at the young man; although reasonably dressed he had a sorrowful expression upon his countenance. He was in the beauty of youth, strong, healthy and comely. His untidy blond locks fell across his face, but Phoebe could see that the youth’s lips were pitted with sores. Phoebe drew back. *This youth was sick and I do not want to catch what he has.*

“Please,” uttered the youth. “Could you give me your drink? My throat is parched. I have a terrible cold and I have cold sores all around my mouth and my throat burns. A small drink would help me so and if it is lemonade it will perhaps heal me,” he said.

“Why aren’t you in bed if you are sick?” asked Phoebe, which again was quite natural.

The youth looked away and bowed his head. "I have no one to love me, no one to look after me when I am ill. My friends, because I have sores on my lips, have left me and don't want to have anything to do with me," he replied.

Phoebe held out the container which the youth took and guzzled the liquid down his dry throat. When finished he wiped his mouth with his sleeve. "Oh that was good. I feel better already," he said and handed back the container to Phoebe.

"Thank you little girl," he said and moved off.

Phoebe continued to make her way home, but was now very worried. Mummy had given her three things, cake, a coat and a drink, now she had none. What would she say to her when she asked 'did you enjoy the drink and cake and where is your coat?'

I will tell a story that the coat was stolen and that I ate the cake and had the drink, she thought. Deep down she knew this was wrong, because it was a lie. Phoebe decided to tell mummy the truth and if it meant punishment, especially for giving away the coat, then so be it!

So she walked towards home, hungry, thirsty, cold and sad. Not long to go now before she was there. A man was coming in the opposite direction. Phoebe did not look up, she had nothing else to give nor did she want to be asked anything.

Phoebe and the man passed, but as they did, the unknown gentleman whispered, "Phoebe."

Phoebe stopped in her tracks. "Do I know you sir? Mummy said I should not talk to strangers."

The man, who was a kindly old gent, was tall and sprightly. His cheeks were soft and his grey hair was smooth and full. The man gave a cheeky laugh, "Ha, your mother is quite right."

"But how did you know my name?" questioned Phoebe.

"I knew your name before you was born." the man replied.

"Are you a relative? Do you know mum and dad?"

"Yes, indeed. I know them."

Phoebe just stood there with a questioning frown upon her face. Puzzled, she asked, "How?"

"I know granddad Watson, your other grandparents, your parents, Leif and all your friends." The man placed a strong comforting hand upon Phoebe's shoulder,

“You have done well Phoebe. Never have I seen such simple kindness from the heart. You gave the little girl cake when she needed it, a coat for the boy when he shivered, drink to the youth that was ill. Today you will no longer be known as just Phoebe, but Princess Phoebe, the good Samaritan.”

“But I have none for myself. It is all gone and my mother gave me those things that I should enjoy and be trusted with. Now, I have given them away and I will never be trusted again.”

The stranger replied, “I knew a man once whose name was Job and he lost everything too, just like you. In the end after being faithful and doing what he knew was right, he received all those things back that he had lost and much more.

“You have been tested Phoebe and you have passed. Go on your way. Listen, I think I hear your mummy and daddy calling. You have been away longer than what you think and they are looking for you. And you know why?” The stranger asked.

Phoebe shook her head.

“Because they love you and care for you. In that way you are truly blessed. “

Phoebe heard approaching feet. It was mummy and daddy running towards her. “Phoebe where have you been? You’ve been away so long, we were worried about you!”

“It’s all right mum, dad. The man said you were looking for me.”

Kylie and Francis looked about. “What man?” asked dad. Phoebe looked too, but saw no one. He had gone – as though vanished!

“Mum, I am sorry but I gave away the cake and drink and there was a little boy who was shivering, so I gave him my coat. Are you angry?”

“Angry? Never. We are proud of you,” said mum, smiling.

Dad placed his arms around Phoebe providing warmth against the breeze. “Come daughter, let’s go home. Teas waiting and your sister and brothers are starving. Plenty to eat and drink and we’ll find another coat for you to put on.”

