

THE CHICKEN COOP CAFÉ

A story about disappointment and when bad things happen to good people.

The air was crisp and the leaves were crunchy; the breeze tousled then mounded them red, gold and bunchy.

Trees shimmered and blazed on a brilliant blue sky, as Hartlie measured the mounds with a twinkled brown eye.

It had been such a long time since Hartlie had jumped, in a golden brown heap that the trees had just dumped, on the earth like a wooly warm blanket for fall, winter soon would replace with a snowy white shawl.

Laughing... He threw handfuls of leaves in the air, then watched as they twizzled, getting caught in his hair.

He rolled in them, kicking them high in the breeze; then they blew back all over him, making him sneeze.

Laughing and choking, coughing and sneezing, Hartlie found this pastime incredibly pleasing.

He lay in the leaf mound covered in pleasure, marveling how each season had its own hidden treasure.

He sat up brushing the leaves from his coat; then coughed up a leaf that had flown down his throat.

Noticing a niggle deep down in his tummy, he decided on breakfast, something hot, sweet and yummy.

He hiked into town to the 'Chicken Coop Café', where the aroma of cinnamon buns mixed with the hay.

Those hot sticky buns, so gooey and sweet, were absolutely Hartlie's most favorite treat.

They cooled on the counter in sweet sticky array, what a deliciously, delightful start to the day.

He sat down and ordered some milk for his bun, as Chenille went to see if the next batch was done.

She limped slowly back behind the counter to see, if the next batch had risen and was ready to be, put into the oven 'til done to perfection, her work never leaving much time for reflection.

Life wasn't easy for this curly haired bird, but she never complained, never uttered a word, about her health or her family that were all in a mess, only asking for others that God would "*please bless.*"

Born lame in both legs and deaf in one ear, with ringlets for feathers one thing was quite clear, She'd turned what was wrong to a wonderful right, refusing to feel sorry for herself and her plight.

For years she had suffered, for years never flown from duty and family now almost half grown.

The pain in her legs matching that of her heart, as she watched while her sad family just fell apart.

She'd worked ever so hard to hold family together, but her husband was shiftless, never lifting a feather.

Limping home one day to her dear little troop, she was shocked to find hubby had just flown the coop.

She sat in the midst of six heartbroken chicks, wondering what it would take and how could she fix this mess of a life that they found themselves in, so she sat and cried with them, her head in a spin.

"I'm hungry", "I'm tired", "I'm scared" came the cries from her six little chicks all with tears in their eyes.

"What should I do and how shall we eat...? I, I've got to do something to get us back on our feet!

It looks like I've got some big choices to make; I can wallow in sadness, shiver and shake...or, pick myself up and determine to rise about the sorrow and shock of this dreadful surprise."

To the shock of her chicks, she jumped up to make a beeline for the kitchen where she started to bake, a wondrous array of delectable treats, cakes, pies and cookies and cinnamon sweets.

She baked all night long 'til the sun shone its rays, through the window and into a sweet, steamy haze, floating up from the pile and out onto the street, gently beckoning noses to a nearby treat.

That's how Chenille started 'The Chicken Coop Café,' selling out of her yummys that very same day, taking care of herself and her ornery brood in a hay filled kitchen that was somewhat crude.

Word flew round the Bog and before very long she was far too busy to think of all that was wrong.

Critters stood in lines for her tasty confections, buying boxes and bags of their favorite selections.

Licking his lips, Hartlie finished his bun, eating every last morsel to the very last crumb.

Deciding to leave, he got up to pay, but noticed some smoke rising out from the hay.

Startled, he called for Chenille to beware, as smoke and then fire billowed into the air.

Limping, she raced to find all of her brood, as flames started feasting on all her fine food.

Making sure that the family was all safe and sound, Hartlie ran to get help but none was to be found.

Grabbing a bucket he made for the creek only to find that the bucket had sprung a huge leak!

So he pulled up a bush out of sheer desperation, trying to beat back the flames with their red devastation.

"I'll not let you win!" Hartlie growled as he beat, at the smoke and the flames that now licked at his feet.

He fought, and he fought till his strength was all drained, he was burned and all sooty and his muscles were strained.

The fire had consumed every bit of the Coop; the only thing left was the front porch stoop.

Exhausted... he sat in the ruins wondering why, bad things happen to good folks, then he started to cry.

Tears cut a path down his black sooty face, as he thought of Chenille and the loss of her place.

"She's already suffered so much," Hartlie cried, *"It's just so unreasonably, so unjustified!"*

I don't understand, she's so sweet and so kind and doesn't deserve being put in this bind!"

*"Hartlie...where are you?" Chenille called through the smoke,
"Awww... It looks like you need a good wash and hot soak.
You're exhausted, burned and been through a tough test, let's see
about a bath and a good nights rest."*

*"That's just like you," Hartlie smiled at the curly haired bird, "always
thinking of others which, right now, seems absurd.*

*I'd think you'd be fussing, fuming and crying, stomping your feet and
giving up trying.*

*Instead... you're concerned about what I might need, showing love to
others in thought, word and deed.*

*Oh, I wish I could sweep away all of this pain, fix your life and
your legs so neither are lame..."*

*"Hartlie! My life's not been easy but it sure isn't lame and there's
no sense in looking for someone to blame.*

*If you sit around wondering why life isn't fair, it'll pass you right by, as
time doesn't care.*

*You've heard 'Every cloud has it's own silver lining,' so I know it'll come
in God's perfect timing.*

*God didn't make me a curly haired quitter and I'm much too grateful to
God to be bitter!*

*My chicks are all safe and I've oodles of friends and this certainly I
sn't where my story ends!*

*Just look what God suffered when He gave up His Son, then think of
what Jesus had to overcome!"*

*Wrapping a wing round his tired aching back, they leaned on each
other in that burned out shack.*

"Mmm... You're right," Hartlie smiled, "It's just as God planned... at the end of our rope, is His outstretched hand.

Besides... He promised He'd never leave us alone if we trust and obey and are one of His own.

Chenille... You just wait, watch and see how God turns this around, why He might put a brand new café on this ground!"

Trusting that God would take care of them all, regardless the need, how big or how small, they held on to each other, limping back through the Bog, six chicks, Chenille and one tired sooty dog.

The end... or could it be...?
THE BEGINNING!

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Scriptures from the Holy Bible to help us with life's trials.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs...heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

Romans 5:3-4 We rejoice also in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character and character, hope.

John 3:16 For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son that who ever would believe in Him would not perish but have life everlasting.

This series was written in an effort to help children understand that nothing can overcome us if we are walking close to Jesus, trusting in His love and obeying His commandments