

FOOTPRINTS AND BREADCRUMBS

A story of how we overcome fear.

Snowflakes by the millions had clustered and floated through stark Bog tree limbs now white sweater and coated.

Trees glittered and sparkled as the sun rose higher, as if dusted by diamonds nestled close to a fire.

Hartlie peered through his windows now frosted with ice, smiling at footprints left overnight by some mice.

They'd tracked him a note in the snow for his pleasure, a note he'd remember and one that he'd treasure.

It read, "We're so grateful for you and how much you share," and it warmed his heart that they really did care enough to tromp through the ice and thick snow, in freezing cold temperatures of fifteen below, just to show him their love and appreciation, in a way so unique and with such imagination.

Still smiling...

He went to the kitchen; got bread that was stale, then took it outside to leave the birds a crumb trail.

Walking out to some trees, he started the trail, winding it back to his cottage for the birds that were frail.

They'd find there a shelter Hartlie'd built long ago, a birdhouse equipped for the fussiest crow.

Starting to shiver, he went back inside, satisfied that the breadcrumbs would be a clear guide.

Settling into his chair now warmed by the fire, he propped up his feet and began to admire how the golden red flames leapt, dancing and glimmering as comforting heat rose of logs that were shimmering.

He mused at the wonders and beauty of fire; how it cooks our food; keeps us warm and drier.

But if not contained, how it can consume, anything in its' path in a blistering plume.

That's how it is with fear, Hartlie thought...a little keeps you safe, but a lot...distracted!

The heat from the fire made him drowsy and so, he gently slipped into sleeps sweet under-tow.

Surprised, he awoke on a golden soft beach, which lay beside water the color of peach.

He walked to the water, cupped his hands, took a drink, it was peachy and sweet and he started to think this was the most beautiful place he'd ever seen, so balmy and peaceful, completely serene.

It was almost as though he'd been there before, as it seemed so familiar, so safe, so secure.

He saw in the distance a cliff up ahead, it was massive in size and he noticed it led straight into the sea where huge rocks lay sown into waves deep, dark and completely unknown.

It made him uneasy so he decided to stay on this part of the beach that was out of harms way.

At the edge of the beach stood some curvy palm trees, with clusters of coconuts that swayed with the breeze.

Meandering in and out of the trees, were some little Bog birds crawling round on their knees.

They were picking up crumbs in an edible trail, wee tasty crumpets, a favorite of quail.

They chatted and munched, slowly nibbling their way down the beach and away from the safe little bay.

Hartlie called to them hoping he could keep them away from the cliff and the rocks, the waves and the spray.

"Wait!" Hartlie yelled...***"Please, please wait for me, there is danger***

ahead that perhaps you can't see!"

But...they acted as though they neither saw nor heard, which Hartlie found completely absurd.

He needed to stop them so he started to run, but his legs felt so heavy as if weighing a ton.

The more he struggled, the slower he went and this too seemed a strangely familiar torment.

He looked back to see if help could be found, frustrated as now he was stuck to the ground.

The sun set gently into the peach colored sea, but the sky never dimmed, now how could this be?

Behind him the footprints, ahead the crumb trail, all part of a puzzle, some important detail.

With a start and a shiver, Hartlie awoke; the only thing left from the fire was some smoke.

What could this strange dream have possibly meant...the footprints, the breadcrumbs, what did they represent?

He needed more wood for the fire and so, he bundled up tight against the wind and the snow.

Shivering...

He forced his way to the barn and log pile, a short distance that now seemed more like a mile.

Grabbing an armload of logs from the heap, he hurried through drifts that by now were quite deep.

The cold sliced straight through his gloves and clothes, and icicles clung tight to his frozen, wet nose.

The flakes now whipped sideways, so he couldn't see, the footpath he'd followed or where it should be.

He'd lost sight of his cottage, the trees, the sky, unable to move, the snow now waist high.

Fear wound it's claws round his heart and his mind, "*Let's see you fix this one!*" growled a voice so unkind.

Hartlie knew all too well this sound in his ear, and where it came from was abundantly clear.

His stomach felt tight, as if all wadded up, and he started to tremble like a frightened young pup.

I simply can't give into this wretched fear, it'll make things seem worse than they already appear.

He knew he'd have to do something and fast, now caught in this snow swirling, fierce wintry blast.

Oh Lord, help my mind overcome all this fear, I need to think clearly and feel you are near.

He dug furiously into the growing snow bank, carving a snow cave where he gratefully sank.

Trying to stay warm, he curled into a ball, watching as the cave became blocked by snowfall.

He poked a round hole in the snow overhead, shoving out his red kerchief so help could be led, to the place where he lay, nearly frozen to death, uncertain he'd be able to draw his next breath.

Suddenly...

Light and warmth poured from the hole overhead and it cuddled his body from his toes to his head.

Opening his eyes, he rose to his feet, basking in the sunbeam, it's light and his heat.

There...

Stretched out before him was the beach from his dream, with that water tasting of peaches and cream.

He kicked off his boots, running through the warm sand, so pleased to be out of that freezing cold land.

In the sand he could see his footprints from before, like some sort of sign that he shouldn't ignore.

Ahead that same crumb trail stretched far down the beach and he felt as if something lay just within reach.

Then... a family of mice appeared as if by magic, the same family of mice that lived up in his attic.

The Rodenti's had left him that note in the snow that seemed like such a long time ago.

Now they were trampling a note in the sand, but just why they wrote it he could not understand.

It read...

"God works in our faith, not in our fear," now why did they write that right now, right here?!

Immediately...

A brilliant white light flashed onto the beach, and he knew it was Jesus who stood just within reach.

He fell to his knees, overwhelmed by great fear; trembling, realizing God's son was so near.

He tried reaching out, but was frozen by fright, unable to see through the blinding white light.

Then he tried praying but could not make a sound, as fear of the Lord was so deep, so profound.

The most he could do was whisper the name of the one whom he loved and to whom he laid claim.

"Jesus...Jesus," was all that it took, then the fear subsided and he no longer shook.

Jesus reached out to take hold of his hand and the joy that he felt, he could barely withstand.

Love and peace saturated his mind and his heart and he knew without doubt this would be a new start.

"Come walk with me," Jesus gently assured, "I've some things to show you now that you've matured.

Hartlie...

Wisdom begins with fearing the Lord, a respectful fear that shows He's adored.

This pleases God's heart as He love you so and shows Him you're learning and wanting to grow...

But the battle you've had with fear in your life, causes nothing but sickness heartache and strife.

Did you ever wonder why fear troubled you so, or why when you prayed you never let go, of the problems or people you were praying about, it was because all those prayers were infected with doubt.

We have to trust God, He's made that quite clear, He only works in our faith not our fear.

Fear puts a person in prison you see, but I died on the cross to set people free!

For fear to die, your faith must increase, so that you can live life full of joy, love and peace.

Remember the footprints you saw on the beach, they were signposts of victories I've helped you reach.

The breadcrumbs were a trail left to guide you through life, so you'd stay close to me and overcome strife."

Tears gently rolled dripping off Hartlies' chin, there was so much to say, but where to begin?

"Jesus, forgive me, I now understand that by growing my faith I can then take command of this fear which robs me of your love and peace, so help me, I pray that my faith will increase."

Instantly...

Hartlie was back in the frozen snow cave...but now with an outlook that

belongs to the brave.

Shaking his head and blinking his eyes, his surroundings took him by total surprise.

Without warning...

A huge chunk of snow collapsed on his head, revealing a tunnel that hopefully led to a place that perhaps might be safe and warm, a place that would shelter him out of this storm.

"Jesus," he hollered...

"I'm kicking my faith right into high gear! cuz I know that you're getting me out of here!"

He squeezed through the tunnel, laughing and shouting, from now on he'd be living life without doubting!

He wiggled and crawled but stopped at a sound of familiar voices, then he new he'd been found.

"Hey...over here!" he yelled, shoving snow to the side, then he hit some ice and began to slide.

He slid on his tummy picking up steam, shooting right past the shocked Rodenti rescue team.

They were jumping and yelling, laughing and crying, so glad to find Hartlie living not dying.

He shot through the tunnel and through his front door, landing next to the fireplace with it's warm wooden floor.

There were hugs all around midst the laughter and tears, and they told of the red kerchief, the snow and their fears.

"We've been digging tunnels for the last two days, trying to set up some sort of rescue maze, but you found us before we could find you and

it's incredibly all to good to be true!!!"

They pulled off his boots, then bundled him up, put more logs on the fire and more tea in his cup.

Hartlie soaked up the love, the tea and the heat, remembering the beach with its' water so sweet.

Remembering the lesson Jesus had taught, that if we truly trust Him, staying close as we ought, then our footprints will remind us of answers to prayer and the breadcrumbs will guide us by His loving care.

The End
or could it be?
The Beginning

THE BEGINNING

Scriptures from the Holy Bible that help us with fear and faith.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline.

Philippians 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done.

1 Peter 5:7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares for you.

Psalms 55:22 Give your burdens (fears, worries) to the Lord, and He will take care of you. He will not permit the Godly to slip and fall.

Hebrews 11:6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.

Mark 11:22-24 Jesus said "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen (faith) and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours."

John 3:16 For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

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