

PEAPOD'S GREEN GROCERY

A story about the love of money and the dangers of greed

A brilliant blue sky and a crispy clean breeze, swept the red and gold carpet of autumns' first leaves.

Twirling, they fell from the trees to the ground, heaping themselves into color strewn mounds.

The wind shifted the mounds with each gust that blew, a tumbling kaleidoscope that rippled and grew.

Some leaves danced together and some alone, yet all fit together on the path they were blown.

Charmed by the host of songbirds he heard, Hartlie strolled on delighted by the scene he observed.

Enjoying the colors and scents of fall, marveling how God had created it all.

Off in the distance, the sound of a sneeze made its' way to his ear on the strength of the breeze.

Then a cough, then a snort, then an asthmatic wheeze, coming round full circle to a monstrous sneeze!

He walked over to see from just where the sound came, but saw no one to whom he could attach blame.

Crossing over the path to an oversized mound, he was curiously drawn by a raspy throat sound.

Bending over the mound he was given a scare, as the mound detonated leaves into the air.

Out from the middle of the mound rose a heap, of matted brown fur and eyes full of sleep.

"Achooooooo!" Sneezed the mess of long tousled hair, blinking into the sun in allergic despair.

"Oh my...and God bless you!" Hartlie said quite surprised, realizing it was Tangles that the leaves had disguised.

"Hhhhhhh...hi Hartlie," Tangles sputtered, blowing his nose, shaking himself from his head to his toes.

"Th...th..that's better," he said with a lopsided smile, *"I can breathe and see better now I'm out of th...that pile."*

The sun was so warm and the sky was so blue, I decided to lie down and just enjoy the view.

I didn't realize that I'd fallen asleep and that the falling leaves had gotten so deep.

I needed some peace, some quiet and rest, cuz you know where I work... achooo...I get sooo distressed.

I wanted a break from my boss and that place...who'd of thought a green grocer would be such a rat race!"

"How is your boss Mr. Scumley these days?" Hartlie asked knowing full well Scumley's ill-tempered ways.

"Maybe one day he'll learn life's far too short, too argue, yell, fuss fume and snort!"

"Oh me..."

I'm grateful this job feeds my brood," Tangles sighed, *"but it's tough as he's always so angry and snide.*

He's owned Peapod's Green Grocery most of his life, but the money he's earned seems to bring mostly strife.

It seems there is never enough, he wants more, so he lives fruit and veggies, hardly leaving the store.

We work daylight to dark; a cold hearted career, but I'm thankful he gives me one day off a year."

"One day a year!!" gasped Hartlie dismayed, *"well I certainly hope all your work is well paid!"*

"Honestly Hartlie, I don't get paid a great deal, but he gives me leftovers that help make us a meal.

It sure helps us out when he does give us food, even though it's only when he's in a good mood.

We shave of the bruises and cut off what's rotten, make a big pot of soup and all is forgotten.

I...I hate to be rude Hartlie, but I've got to run, he'll be furious thinking that I've been out having fun."

With that...

He sneezed one last time, dashing off in a hurry, waving goodbye and trying hard not to worry.

Shortly...

Peapod's Green Grocery Store came into view, Tangles knees knocked nervously as time off was taboo.

Holding his breath, he stepped through the door, **"Aha!"** bellowed Scumley looking ready for war.

"I suppose you think it's just fine and Jim Dandy, to show up for work when you want, when it's handy.

*Well you'd best think again, I've got news for you, show up late one more time and your fired...**your through!!!**"*

"I...I'm sorry Mr. Scumley," whispered Tangles near tears, *"it wont happen again, that's the first time all these years."*

*"I don't care it's the first, it just best be the **last**, or you'll be getting the boot and getting it **fast!**"*

Tangles grabbed a large broom, started sweeping the floor, proceeding to sweep up every aisle in the store.

Then he mopped, then dusted, then stocked every bin, piling fresh fruit and vegetables up to his chin.

They worked until after the sun had gone down, Mr. Scumleys' mean face still set in a frown.

"Well, I suppose you'll be wanting to leave now," he growled, as up and down spotless aisles he prowled.

"Yes sir...

I'd best be getting home to my family and wife...you know...they're the most important things in my life.

I spend so little time with my brood anymore that they tease me saying I'm married to you and this store."

He smiled hoping Scumley would enjoy the joke, but instead his face reddened and he looked like he'd choke.

He sputtered...

"Just get out and go home to your idiot offspring, you'll amount to nothing be a hired underling!"

Tangles crept out the door grateful to be, headed home for the night to his dear family.

It was chilly outside so he hurried along, away from Peapod's and that distasteful song Scumley would sing as he closed up the store, while counting the money, his favorite chore.

"There's nothing like apples to brighten your day, there's nothing like melons stacked high in some hay.

There's nothing much sweeter than a strawberry eater so give me your money it's now time to pay!

Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Chuckling gleefully he thought nothing strange, as he stuffed all his pockets full of jingling change.

Then came the odd custom he went through every night, he'd tell all the produce to *"Take care and sleep tight."*

Then he'd kiss the carrots and pat the peas, cuddle the cucumbers, give the squash a squeeze.

He'd pet every peach, every plum, every pear, eager they'd make him a Bog millionaire.

Locking the door he made for his house, a neglected estate unfit for a mouse.

Its' large darkened rooms and leaking tile roof, its' tall broken windows all offering proof that a bona fide tightwad lived in utter disgrace, unwilling to spend money to repair his own place.

He noticed some kids playing close to his yard, which instantly angered and put him on guard.

"What are you up to!? Don't be hanging round here! So make like a bad dream and just disappear!"

The kids weren't taken at all by surprise, they knew he was easy to antagonize.

He stomped to the front door which was hard to get open, as the hinges were rusted or totally broken.

They watched as he vanished behind his huge door, then they made up a mean song to even the score.

"Dumbly, Scumley, cheapskate, a tightwad and an ingrate, a tootie fruity, sorta snooty, meanie we just tolerate."

Seething, Scumley yelled back in total disgust, *"It's no wonder my money's the only think I trust!!*

Scallywags!!!

I'll not put up with you one minute more!!!" he yelled, stomping a foot that shot clean through the floor.

Then he heard a loud '**crack**' that went off like a rocket, the floor giving way from the weight in each pocket. He crashed through the floor, wedging up to his chin, arms clamped to his sides, what a mess he was in.

"Hhhhhhelp," he yelled, *"hhhhhelp, I'm stuck and can't budge, come quick I need someone to give me a nudge."*

He waited and listened for help to arrive, wondering what he could do that would help him survive.

He hollered for help till his voice just gave out, frightened as none came at the sound of his shout.

"What's wrong with these critters that they won't come help me, how mean and uncaring can these critters be!"

*"Well that's a good question," said a voice from the stair, "seems we get what we've given...did **you** help...did **you** care?"*

Scumley stuttered...

*"Wh...wh...why don't pester me with this nonsense about caring, I'll be the only one with whom **I'm** sharing!"*

Besides...who are you?" he mumbled, afraid of the fact that the voice was his conscience stating just what he lacked.

"I've ignored you before and I'll ignore you again....just mind your own business, all you do is complain!"

He twisted and turned trying to jerk himself loose but the floor and the voice held him in a tight noose.

"Well...now that I finally have all your attention, there's a few things about which I'd like to make mention."

The voice then moved closer causing Scumley to flinch, *"It's time to come clean Scumley, I'm not giving an inch!"*

"All right, all right...but I've got nothing to say!" "That's just fine," said the voice, *"we'll play it your way."*

You just stay there all snarley not saying a word, just listen like I've done, without being heard!"

"Let's see now..."

Can we say...tightwad, cheapskate, grouchy and greedy, can we say...never helps a friend, a neighbor or the needy?

Can we say...

Always quarrelsome, cantankerous and crabby? Which only goes to prove that you are nasty, mean and grabby!"

*"It doesn't prove a **single** thing!" Scumley snapped now all dejected, " Well, where's your neighbors, friends and help if you are so respected!?"*

The voice had struck a serious blow to Scumley's nerves now frayed,
"Wh...why...they're coming soon, there almost here, they've all just been delayed!"

"OK..."

But, if they're not here by sunup, we'll know how the Bog all feels, time heals all wounds or so they say, but it also wounds all heels!"

"Oh shut up!" I'm not listening; you're just silly imaginations! I'll not take you seriously or your scurrilous accusations.

Let it be known right here and right now, whoever rescues me, will never have to work again but will live in luxury.

The hallway grew dark and the silence deep as he weighed what he'd sown and what he might reap.

Somewhere a clock ticked as the time it would keep, through a cold lonely vigil that kept Scumley from sleep.

Meanwhile...morning crept quietly into the sky; critters stumbled from beds with sleep in each eye.

Little ones readied for school and play, while parents readied for work and the day.

Tangles ate breakfast, ran a comb through his hair, then flew off to work, that 'Peapodish' nightmare.

Arriving on time he went looking around but Scumley his boss was nowhere to be found.

Getting right to work, he opened the shop, as customers gathered for the best of each crop.

By days end, Mr. Scumley still hadn't appeared, Tangles brooded over why he had just disappeared.

"What should I do? Should I just wait? Should I have the deputy go to his estate?"

Should I get a search party and go door to door or do like he'd do and simply ignore?

Wait...

Hartlie will know what to do in this case; he'll sort this all out at a tornadoes pace.

Racing to where he knew Hartlie would be, he explained all his worries regarding Scumley.

"Well Tangles...

The very first thing we both need to do is go to his house and look for some clue."

Off they rushed to the rundown estate, praying they'd find him before it was to late.

It was dark and quite late when they reached Scumley's place and worry was written on poor Tangles face.

Pushing open the door with Hartlie behind, they stepped quietly in dreading what they might find.

Shazaaaam!

There was old Scumley just inside the door, looking like he'd been eaten by the worn, wooden floor.

Tangles rushed over to help pull him out, but let go of his head when he heard Scumley shout.

"Ouch! Ouch! What in the world do you think you're doing? If you break my neck...it's you I'll be suing!!!"

"Now wait just a minute!" Hartlie angrily snapped, *"Tangles wanted to help as the floor had you trapped!*

I'd think you'd be grateful help finally came, but you've treated him badly for years...shame, shame, shame!!!

Hartlie knelt down on the floor trying to see, what was stopping old Scumley from being set free.

He could see bulging pockets with hands jammed inside; Scumley was stuck in the hole cuz his pants were to wide!

Try pulling your hands out," Hartlie yelled as he tugged, but Scumley looked horrified, as if he'd been mugged.

"What...let go of my money? Are you totally nuts!? That's not happening, it's settled...there's no 'if's' 'ands' or 'buts'!"

"Mr. Scumley! It will certainly have ill effects on you health, deciding to stay stuck to keep hold of your wealth.

But...if that's the decision you've come carefully to...well...take care; sleep tight and may God bless you.

C'mon Tangles...

Let's go kiss those carrots and pet those peas, let's cuddles some cucumbers and give that squash a squeeze."

"Wait...wait!!! You can't leave me here just stuck in this floor!" wailed Scumley as Hartlie was shutting the door.

"Come back...please come back, I'll be good, I'll be kind, I, I'll let go of my money, I've changed my mind."

Hartlie cracked the door open and popped his head round, staring at Scumley who now made not a sound.

"How do we know that you mean what you say? That you've changed your mind and mended your way?!"

"Oh I'll change, I will...I will indeed, I know this all happened because of my greed"

"Well, Hartlie nodded...

"admitting a problem is a good place to start, as it proves that you're having a true change of heart.

So, let's get you out of this tight situation, you've had a long hard night of pure aggravation.

Poke a hole in your pockets so the change can run out, then we'll both lift you out but you'd better not pout."

"I won't pout, I promise, I've learned a hard fact, that you may love your money but it can't love you back.

Trust me Hartlie...

If you and Tangles will help me get out, I'll uphold a promise you know nothing about!"

With one final tug, old Scumley was freed, freed from the floor and a lifetime of greed.

"Now you know Mr. Scumley you've believed a big lie, spent your life chasing money and what it could buy, yet the sweetest and best things are given for free, like love and laughter and a friend's loyalty...

It's truly a blessing to give more than receive, and that comes by God's help when we trust and believe."

"Hartlie...

When I was so scared and alone last night, I promised myself that I'd make things right.

I promised to bless whoever rescued me, by giving them a life of sheer luxury.

So...from now on I'll be working for Tangles it seems, making his life easier and fulfilling his dreams.

*I'll fix this place up and make it look **great** and the name on the door will read '**TANGLES ESTATE**'.*

He'll own half of Peapod's Green Grocery Store and to top it all off I'll help you feed the poor."

Standing amazed at what one night brought about, not knowing whether to laugh, cry or shout, they hugged each other then did all three, so grateful that God had set old Scumley free.

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

THE BEGINNING

Scriptures from the Holy Bible that help us understand the dangers of being greedy.

Proverbs 1:19 such is the fate of all who are greedy for money, it robs them of life.

Proverbs 21:26 some people are always greedy for more but the godly love to give.

Psalms 119:36 give me an eagerness for your (God's) laws rather than a love for money!

Matthew 6:24 no one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other, You cannot serve both God and money.

Luke 12:15 then he (Jesus) said to them "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Hebrews 13:5 Don't love money, be satisfied with what you have for God has said, "Never will I leave you, never will I abandon you."

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.