

Saving Susie

By Dana Buck

A

man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24(NIV)

One of the greatest blessings any of us will ever experience is the gift of friendship. It's easy for us to identify and understand the richness that a friend brings to our lives. But, what may not always be evident is how much that relationship may mean to the other person. We all have a powerful opportunity every day to touch the lives of others through friendship – and in doing so, enrich our own lives along the way.

The dark is all consuming
Every sense is on alert
As a figure hurries forward
His manner purposeful and curt

Moving quickly through this dungeon
Crumbling walls mildewed with slime
His footsteps echo urgently
Will he arrive in time?

He's trudged 'cross dusty deserts
Over mountains mile by mile
Fought duels with hostile bandits
Slogged through swamps with crocodiles

He's slept in holes and caverns
Gone days distaining food
Had to drink from muddy footprints
With no time to carp or brood

For neither thirst nor grinding hunger
Or feeling tired or weak or woozy
Can deter his keen, obsessive
Single goal of Saving Susie

Her abductors, oozing evil
Have misjudged their grim opponent
They may have reconsidered
Had they pondered or they'd known it

For he's dogged their every footstep
Every planned evasive hassle
Till he now brought them to ground
Holed up in this medieval castle

He had quickly swum the moat
And then with ease he scaled the walls
He searched the parapets, the courtyard
Passageways and halls

Till he'd found the creaking staircase
And felt a creepy, dark sensation
But our hero never faltered
Descending with no hesitation

The booby traps were many
As he proceeded down the steps
But he triumphed over all
Wearing a smile of grim contempt

So now deep within the dungeon
Through its bowels as dark as night
He advanced upon a doorway
And its dim halo of light

With one great kick he entered
First he zigged and then he zagged
But stopped short when he caught sight of
His darling Susie bound and gagged

Dangling overhead, an anvil
'Round her neck there hung a bomb
With her eyes she pleaded "help me!"
As she struggled to stay calm

She sat upon a platform
In the middle of a pool
While Amazonian piranha
Circled hungrily in schools

He surveyed the situation
And his mind soon formed a plan
He leapt upon the platform
Snatched the bomb up in his hand

As the sweat now stung his eyes
(T'was as hot there as a sauna)
He tossed the bomb into the pool
And soon it rained down minced piranha

Then the sound of snapping cable
Caused Susie's eyes to upward flicker
The heavy anvil started falling
But our hero's reflexes were quicker

He deftly reached for Susie
As the weight fell through the air
He held her safely in his arms
As the anvil smashed the chair

He removed her gag and bindings
And they stood there in the mist
She swooned and sighed "my hero"
Puckering up to give a kiss

Then a sound shattered his reverie
And Susie's move to love him
His opened eyes were startled by
His teacher glaring down above him

She rapped her wooden yardstick
It made him jump (so did his neighbor)
As she wielded that awful weapon
Like a scimitar or saber

"Scotty Patton, are you dreaming?"
She inquired in her wrath
"I distinctly said to study"
"Chapter six and do your math"

"Yet here you sit, your book unopened"
She gave the yardstick one last swish
"With your eyes dull and half lidded"
"And lips puckered like a fish"

The other students laughed and tittered
As his embarrassed pride unbuckled
The humiliation final
When even Susie softly chuckled

"Guess I'll need to keep you after"
The teacher grasped her wooden sword
"Plan on an afternoon of labor"
"Dumping trash and cleaning boards"

With that she turned and left him
Swung her stick like Captain Hook
As little Scotty Patton
Hid his face behind his book

And walking home that afternoon
Once the trash and boards were clean
He imagined Susie needed
To be rescued from some fiend

But before his dream took over
He blinked his eyes and shook his head
As he ambled down the sidewalk
To himself here's what he said

"My dog gone imagination"
"Got the best of me again"
As his eyes were blurred with moisture
He felt that trembling in his chin

"I'm so tired of feeling puny"
"Being the smallest in my class"
"Always feeling overlooked"
"When choosing teams I'm always last"

"I so want to be a hero"
"To be kind and true and brave"
"Like a knight displaying virtue"
"Not some jester or some knave"

"Seems it's only in my day dreams"
"I've got any chance at all"
"To be other than I am"
"So insignificant and small"

Scotty Patton's imagination
Was his pass to other lands
Where cavalries and armies
Stood in wait of his commands

He's an intrepid mountain climber
Conquering Everest with his clients
Or on a quest with shield and sword
Battling Centaurs and giants

One day a fighter pilot
Then the next he's Captain Kidd

Fighting Sioux with General Custer
Battling Moors beside El Cid

And in all his mental fictions
(He can really spin some doozies)
One story line's consistent
Seems he's always saving Susie

For three years he's shyly liked her
(That's forever when you're ten)
But he's never had the nerve
To say "hello" or "how you been?"

Yet he's rescued her from pirates
Plucked her from the railroad tracks
Ridden wild and charging stallions
With her holding on in back

He's rafted over rapids
Climbed a peak to bring her aid
Scotty Patton's saved little Susie
A hundred times since second grade

But for all his grand illusions
And his desire to be a hero
On a scale of one to ten
Scotty Patton felt a zero

After dinner and some homework
Couple chores and some TV
T'was off to bed and soon to sleep
Perhaps to dream of Normandy?

In the morning things were different
With the sun so bright and brilliant
Scotty jumps out of his bed
Yes kids can be so darn resilient

"T'was a morning filled with science
History and creative writing
Till the lunch bell finally rang
Is there any sound that's more inviting?

Scotty headed for the lunchroom
In his bag was ham on rye
He looked for a place to sit
Was then that something caught his eye

At each and every table
Kids sat down with friends well known

'Cept in the corner near the back where
One boy ate his lunch alone

Though he'd seen him in PE class
He didn't know him in the least
Scott just knew that he was foreign
From somewhere in the Middle East

Once he'd seen some big kids tease him
All the others just ignored him
Scotty thought there for a moment
Then with his lunch he ambled toward him

For he'd recalled a recent lesson
That he'd heard in Sunday School
They were talking about Jesus
How he came for man's renewal

He didn't focus on the rulers
Those with power, wealth and fame
He sought out the lost and lonely
T'was for those that Jesus came

So Scotty made a firm decision
Put aside his doubt and fear
Walked to the table in the back
"Do you mind if I sit here?"

The boy was truly startled
Was this another prank or joke?
In the past, kids joined his table
Then threw his food and spilled his Coke

But this time, he sensed, was different
This wasn't meant to taunt or tease
So he pointed to a chair
And with a smile he answered "please"

"My name is Scotty Patton"
And they formally shook hands
"I was wondering who you were"
He took a bite of rye and ham

"My name is Abi Shaara"
"I think I've seen you in PE"
"Can I ask you something Scotty?"
"Why'd you come and sit with me?"

“Well I mostly eat alone”
“But I thought of something better”
“And when I saw you by yourself”
“I thought we’d eat alone together”

And soon they both were laughing
Just as boys will always do
It was the best lunch hour ever
For either of these two

And so they made a pact
That they would eat here every day
Scotty always with his brown bag
Abi with his lunchroom tray

Soon lunches turned into recess
And they would wait for one another
After school Scott went to Abi’s house
And met his Dad and Mother

There were sleepovers and pizza
Trips to movies and the store
When Scotty ate at Abi’s home
He’d things he never tried before

The days turned into weeks
And then the weeks and months rolled by
Scotty realizing something
And he puzzled as to why

His day dreaming had receded
To what was mostly memory
He simply didn’t feel the need
To lose himself in reverie

His days were fun and crowded
Now with Abi as his friend
He still had his thoughts of Susie
(Don’t think that that will ever end)

As their friendship slowly grew
Scott found his loneliness abated
Then one day t’was time for lunch
And at their table Abi waited

Soon the air was filled with talking
Which seemed to mostly come from Scott
Abi nodded, smiled and listened
But he seemed more lost in thought

Till at last he shifted forward
And while Scotty stopped to chew
Abi quietly remarked
“I need to say something to you”

“I want you to know I’m thankful”
“For approaching me that day”
“I think I’d really reached the end”
He paused to find the words to say

“Ever since we left our country”
“Everything just seemed so wrong”
“I had no friends, no one to talk to”
“I never felt like I belonged”

“My Father struggles with employment”
“And this makes my Mother cry”
“Back home he was important”
“Now he lost his place, his pride”

“Some people have been cruel”
“Have said mean and hurtful things”
Scott could see poor Abi struggle
Yet on every word he clings

“They call us names, like terrorist”
“And that’s the bitter irony”
“We had to leave because of terror”
“That’s why my family had to flee”

“So you see, I couldn’t take it”
He looked intently at his friend
“My heart felt dead within me”
“I never thought that it would mend”

Then he sniffed and slowly smiled
Wiped a tear out of his eye
“And that was when this goofy kid”
“Sat down with his goofy ham and rye”

They both then shared a laugh
As Abi’s joy replaced his angst
“That’s why you’ll always be my hero”
“That’s why I had to tell you thanks”

At these words Scott’s life was altered
He was a hero after all
He didn’t need to fight a battle
Climb a mountain, scale a wall

All along he'd had the power
Now he saw it all so plain
He just had to offer friendship
And do it all in Jesus' name

In that moment Scott and Abi
Found the source where joy derives
And the friendship that began in school
Has lasted all their lives

For they'd both discovered treasure
A friend who's closer than a brother
T'was the gift God granted to them
And the gift they gave each other

So through high school, college, work and life
Their friendship never tarried
And crescendoed on that special day
When Scott was getting married

He's nothing if not persistent
(He's also really choosy)
For with Abi standing by his side
Scotty said "I do" to Susie

Friendship is a gift we all can give. And, as with most things in God's economy, when we freely give, we get back so very much more. Practice friendship today. Ask God to show you someone you haven't connected with in some time. Just let them know you are thinking of them. A phone call, a lunch invitation, a hand-written card or even a text message can go a long way in bringing refreshing encouragement to someone who may be in great need of that very thing. God knows those needs, and he will bring people to mind.

Here's an even greater challenge, reach out in friendship to someone you don't know well. A new neighbor, a colleague at work, someone at your church, the new kid in school. Read Galatians 5: 22-26. Can you "be" the fruit of the spirit to someone who may need a friend? Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 25: 40 "And the King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

How many times have you heard small playmates say to each other "Let's be friends!" Children get it, so let's be the children of God. Let's be friends!