

CHAPTER 1

*Flying Treasure*

By Doreen Tamminga

It was cold outside. Ella wrapped her scarf one more time around her neck.

“Come on, you two!” Nick called to Ella and his big brother Lucas. “Let’s go see the big icicles! Dad said they were magnifi-ent!”

The sun was going down, and long shadows crossed the ground. Ella hurried to keep up with her cousins. They were walking across the back edge of the neighbours’ yards to reach the woods. The pond was on the other side of the woods, in Hannah’s back yard. Hannah wouldn’t mind if they visited her pond; she and Ella were friends.

“My dad said the icicles hanging by the waterfall are enormous!” Lucas told Ella. He stopped to wait for her.

“Maybe we can take one home for our treasure collection!” Nick said.

Ella nodded. She wasn’t really listening, though. She was looking at the house they were passing. A light shone in the kitchen window. “Hurry up!” she whispered to Lucas and Nick, “or Mr. Lawson might see us!”

A crow flapped overhead, then settled at the top of a bare birch tree. *Caw! Caw!* it cried noisily, and Ella jumped. Being in Mr. Lawson’s back yard made her nervous. Hadn’t her big brother Isaac told her that Mr. Lawson was a thief? That he never went to work, but biked around with a bag for stealing things?

“Run!” Ella called to the boys, and they did: along the path, through the woods, across the park, and down the hill to the pond.

A black squirrel joined them at the edge of the woods, leaping from branch to branch above their heads. It followed the children into the back yard, then settled on a branch to swish its bushy tail. The children hardly noticed. They ran straight across Hannah’s big backyard and stopped at the edge of the pond. The pond hadn’t frozen over yet, and a small stream of water still flowed down the waterfall.

“There they are!” Nick exclaimed. Great icicles hung on each side of the waterfall, like spokes in a railing.

“Look at them all!” he said. “Let’s get one!”

Far across the yard, lights shone from the house. Hannah’s mom waved from the kitchen window, where she was cooking supper.

But before the children could break off an icicle, there was a *swoosh!* They hadn’t even seen the bird coming, but suddenly it was there, bobbing across the pond to settle on an old fence post. It was a belted kingfisher, all dressed up in a blue suit jacket with a white collar and a rich, dark Russian hat.

Nick grinned. “Do you see the bird?!” he asked, his voice breaking the stillness.

Lucas nodded, then pointed silently for Nick to watch. Once again the bird spread its wings. Chattering noisily, it swooped over the water again.



Ella listened in surprise, then laughed as the black squirrel scolded angrily back from the branch above.

Lucas couldn't take his eyes off the kingfisher. "That is a magnificent bird!" he proclaimed solemnly.

Just then a door slammed, and Lucas looked across the pond to the house. A girl was coming down the deck and across the big backyard.

"Oh, no!" he said. "It's Hannah! Let's go!"

"No, wait!" Ella protested. "We can say 'hi'."

"No." Lucas frowned. "We'll be late for supper," he said.

Ella waved to her friend, then followed the boys as they snapped off an icicle and ran back into the woods. Night was falling, and the woods were dark. Quickly the children climbed back up the steep hillside, using branches and thin tree trunks to pull themselves up.

Another minute and they should be out of the woods and crossing the park. But when they reached the top of the hill, the park was

not there. On every side stood trees, trees, and more trees.

"We must have not gone straight up the hill," Lucas said. "We missed the park!" And he led Ella and Nick off to the right.

It was very dark in the woods now, and the children stumbled on, tripping over roots and branches hidden among the leaves below. A crow cawed noisily in the distance, and again, Ella jumped.

"This can't be right," she said. "The park is supposed to be right at the top of the hill. Where are we going?!"

Suddenly they heard a voice. "Ella! Lucas!" a girl's voice called. "Are you still there?"

It was Hannah. The children stopped in



relief. Hannah would know the way out. These woods were in her backyard.

“We’re over here!” Ella shouted loudly. Another minute passed, then Hannah stood before them, smiling widely.

“You guys must have been running!” she said. “I had to get my coat on, and then I almost didn’t catch up to you!” She pointed down the hillside towards her house. “I just wanted to ask if you would like to see our new puppies!”

*Puppies!* Ella and Nick’s eyes shone, and even Lucas brightened for a moment.

“Yeah, we would,” he said, “but we have to get home for supper...maybe some other time.”

“Sure!” Hannah said brightly. “See you

tomorrow! ’Bye, Ella!” And she headed back down through the woods.

“Uh, Hannah,” Lucas called after her. “Do you know where the park is from here?”

“Yes!” Hannah laughed. “It’s right behind you! See that tall pole? It looks like a very straight tree, but it’s really the flagpole!”

“Oh,” Lucas said. “Right.”

“Thanks!” Ella called after her friend.

“Bye!”

“Why don’t you like Hannah?” Ella asked Lucas when her friend was gone. “Don’t you want to come back tomorrow to see the puppies?”

“I don’t know,” Lucas said. He shrugged. “Puppies aren’t that exciting.”

Ella frowned. Lucas was acting strange.



She was sure he would love to see the puppies.

After crossing the park, the path through the woods was easy to follow. Soon the children were crossing the neighbours' back yards again, on their way home.

They had just reached the other side of old Mr. Lawson's yard, when he came biking up the driveway, right to where the children were walking. A winter hat was perched high on his head, and a rain jacket flapped around him. A bag hung from his handlebars, just as Ella's brother Isaac had said.

"Out exploring the woods?" Mr. Lawson asked cheerfully. "Every season has treasures for us to find!"

Nick smiled back. "We saw a magnificent bird at the pond!" he exclaimed. "It had a dark head and white neck, and it went like this." He tried to make a rattling noise with his mouth.

"That would be a kingfisher!" Mr. Lawson said.

"And we saw these huge icicles too!" Nick added, holding one up.

Ella started backing away, and Lucas pulled on Nick's hand.

"Magnificent!" Mr. Lawson agreed. He leaned his bike against the side of the house, and took the bag from the handlebar. "Icicles aren't as fascinating as a bird, of course," he added, "but they're treasures too."

"Come on," Lucas said, tugging Nick's arm. "We have to go!" He and Ella turned to run, and Nick finally followed.

"Bye!" he shouted to the old man.

Ella ran across the street to her own house, while the boys dashed up the porch steps to their backyard. They were all out of breath, but that didn't stop Nick from shouting, "Hey, Dad! We got some icicles! Can we stick them in the freezer before they melt?!"

Lucas banged the door shut behind him. "We saw a kingfisher!" he exclaimed, "but then it flew away."

"And we showed the old neighbour man our icicles!" Nick added. "He said the bird and icicles are a treasure!"

"Well!" Dad said, coming to look at the icicles. "They are treasures, indeed! God created these amazing things to teach us a little bit about Him."

He helped Nick pull off his snowboots, then added. "But the best place to learn about God, the Creator, is in the Bible, of course. That's a treasure that won't melt or fly away!"

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### *TALK ABOUT IT*

*Do you think Ella's big brother is right—that Mr. Lawson is a thief? Does biking around with a bag make a person a thief? What does the Bible say about telling things about others that may not be true?*