

CHAPTER 3

Lucas and the Big Imagination

By Doreen Tamminga

"We're looking for Ella's watch," Hannah said as Lucas biked up to the girls.

Lucas looked at Ella. "Where did you lose it?" he asked his cousin.

"I don't know," Ella said. "The catch was broken, and I think it maybe fell on the sidewalk when I was biking."

Lucas hopped back on his bike. "I can help you look for it," he said.

The three children biked down the sidewalk slowly, staring at the ground. When they

reached Main Street, they stopped. They weren't allowed to cross Main Street on their own.

Lucas looked at the house on the corner. "This is Adam and Steven's house," he said. "They moved here a couple of weeks ago."

"I know," Ella said. "My mom met their mom at the general store. "Look!" she added. "They're up there on their porch!"

Just then the two boys waved at them. "Hi, Lucas!" they called.

"Hi!" Lucas called back. He and the girls biked up their driveway. "This is my cousin Ella and her friend Hannah," Lucas told the boys.

Adam and Steven looked up. "Hi," they said and continued spreading something on the porch railing.

"What are you guys doing?" Lucas asked.

"We're putting peanuts and breadcrumbs out for the birds," Steven said.

"Mom hasn't put the bird feeder up yet," Adam added, "and we want to get some birds at our house, like Mr. Lawton.

"Oh." The children left their bikes on the driveway and came up onto the porch to watch.

Drip, drip, drip. Snow was melting on the tree



branches above and made big splats on the porch as it fell. It was a slushy day, and the warm sun was beginning to curl snow off the tree trunk in paper thin leaves. *Like curls of chocolate on a fancy cake*, Ella thought.

“Stand by the door,” Adam ordered, “and some birds will come.”

The children obeyed and a minute or two later there was a flutter of wings as a large bird landed on the railing.

“Look! I think it’s a magpie!” Lucas whispered without moving.

“No. That’s a blue jay,” Adam said.

“Magpies are shiny green.”

“Yeah,” Steven added. “They like to steal shiny things too.”

Ella could almost see Lucas thinking as he turned to her. “Mr. Lawton said he’s a magpie,” he said. “Maybe he stole your watch!”

Adam and Steven frowned. “Mr. Lawton’s not a robber!” Adam said. “We saw him at our church last Sunday!”

“Yeah, right down the road there,” Steven added. “He walked to church.”

“My brother said you have a big imagination,” Ella told Lucas. “You like to pretend exciting things—like that the neighbours are robbers.”

“I do not!” Lucas said and turned to go.

“Hey!” Steven stopped him. “Do you all want to see our bunny?”

“Sure!” said Lucas, and the girls followed the boys inside.

Bags of cat food and paperwork filled the hall, along with a few chairs, coats, magazines, and toys. The boys let their coats and shoes drop behind them as they ran upstairs. Ella stood perplexed for a moment, looking for a place to neatly stand her boots.

Just then Mrs. Pritchard popped into the hallway with a coffee cup in one hand, and an armful of books in the other. She was a small lady, not much taller than Ella herself. “You must be Ella!” she said. “I met your mom at the general store. And is this your friend?” she asked.

“Hannah is my friend and Lucas is my cousin,” Ella explained. “We were biking down the sidewalk looking for my watch. I lost it.”

“Oh, dear,” said Mrs. Pritchard. “That sounds like me. I’m always losing things! Usually I find them in my pocket or on the kitchen counter!”

Ella started to smile, then froze. *Maybe...* Slowly she slid her hand into her own coat pocket. Her smile grew bigger as her fingers curled around something cold. “My watch!” she exclaimed happily. “I forgot that I put it in my pocket because I didn’t want it to fall off!”



Lucas had come back downstairs. Now he shook his head at her. “Silly girl!” he said. “You just imagined that you lost it!”

“Silly boy!” she retorted. “You just imagined that it was stolen!”

Adam had fetched Smoky from his hiding place under the bed, and pushed the big bunny into Lucas's arms.

"Doesn't it pee on the floor?" Lucas asked.

The boys laughed. "No!" said Steven.

"Smoky has a litter box downstairs, just like the cats."

There were cats in the house too. Ella bent to pet a grey one that rubbed against her legs, while Hannah tried to coax a calico cat into her arms.

The children took turns holding the bunny. When Smoky began to squirm, Adam pulled the bunny from Ella's arms and set him down. *Lippety-lippety*. As the children watched, the bunny hopped off to hide behind the couch.

Steven dashed back up the stairs. "Come on!" he called. "Let's slide down the stairs!"

"Yeah!" Adam shouted. "I'll get the mattress."

The boys hauled a long foam mattress up from the basement and up the next flight of stairs.

"It's just like a sled!" Steven explained. "Me and Adam will sit in the front after you all get on. We'll hold the front edge up so we don't go sailing off the front."

Lucas dashed up the stairs. Ella and Hannah looked at each other. "Come on!" Ella exclaimed with bright eyes. "It will be fun!" They piled on, cross-legged, and clutched the sides of the mattress. The stairs looked much longer and steeper from up here. Hannah looked scared.

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Adam and Steven held the mattress.

"Ready?" Adam called. In a flash the boys jumped on, and the mattress took off.

"Hold on!" Steven shouted.

It wasn't a very fast ride, but fast enough with all the bumping! The children landed in a pile at the bottom of the stairs, then scrambled to their feet to try it again. This time the ride was faster, and Ella and Hannah slipped off the back half-way down the stairs. "Hey!" they shouted, and scurried back up the stairs to join the next ride.

Squeeeeak! The boys were halfway up the stairs when they stopped. *Squeeeeak!* Again there was the sound of a squeaky clothesline being pulled in.

"Is your mom hanging laundry outside?" Lucas asked.

“No! It’s a bluejay!” Adam explained, and galloped back down the stairs. “It gives a warning call before it comes flying in for food.”



The others followed him as he rushed to the front window. Sure enough, a blue jay had landed on the railing to snag a peanut. Its black eyes looked bright against the blues and whites of its feathers. The children watched as it cocked its head from side to side to choose a peanut. How they laughed as it finally snatched a peanut and swallowed the whole thing, shell and all, on a nearby branch.

Soon some goldfinches took its place and pecked at the bread crumbs scattered on the railing and porch floor. The children were still watching when, suddenly, a bird called from the tree overhead. Instantly, the small birds scattered at the warning, bobbing into the tree branches for safety—all, except one.

The last goldfinch lingered, pecking a few more breadcrumbs from the railing, when *wham!* There was a flurry of feathers as a Cooper’s hawk swooped in and snatched the little bird in its claws. The hawk nearly hit the window, but veered off and flapped up, up, over the rooftop and out of sight.

“What was that?!” Lucas and Ella gasped. But this time Adam and Steven had no answer. It was frightening to see death, when a moment ago there was only sunshine and life.

There was a little *scratching* noise in the silence that followed, and the children turned to see Smokey beside the couch, scratching one ear with his long foot.

Lucas brightened and hurried over to pick him up. The bunny let himself be held, and the girls also had a turn holding Smoky before it was time to go.

“Wasn’t that sad about the little goldfinch?” Ella asked as they were getting on their bikes.

“Yeah,” Hannah said. “It didn’t pay attention and the hawk got it.”

“My mom said you don’t know when you’re going to die,” Ella said. “It could be today or tomorrow, even! So that’s why you need your sins washed away by Jesus.”

They were biking down the sidewalk now, and Ella called back to the others, “Watch out for the pothole!” Slushy snow had almost hidden the big hole in the sidewalk, and Hannah quickly steered her bike around the hole.

But Lucas wasn’t paying attention. His imagination was running wild again. This time he was thinking about pet bunnies and the wild bunny that had visited his backyard last summer.

“I’m sure I could catch it and keep it as a pet!” he said as his front wheel dropped into the hole and he flew through the air...

TALK ABOUT IT

We are often busy playing, planning, and solving problems just like Lucas and Ella, and it seems like life will go on this way forever. The goldfinch's death reminded the kids that life is not certain. We don't know that we will live on day after day in good health. This can sound scary unless we know that our lives are kept in the perfect care of our Creator. Won't you ask God to be your Saviour and Keeper?