



Chasing Butterflies



A STORY FOR CHILDREN

"Andrew and Ella, you did such a nice job helping me in the kitchen this morning," Mom praised her nine-year-old twins. "Just look at everything we got done!"

The children glanced about the kitchen. A batch of freshly-baked caramel cookies sat cooling on the counter, five loaves of hot homemade bread were cooling on the stovetop, and the last of the dishes had been washed clean and put away. Andrew and Ella glanced at each other with pleased smiles. They were glad they had helped their mother cheerfully.

"Now can we go outside and catch butterflies?" begged Andrew. He was so excited that he hopped up and down on one foot.

"Oh, yes, please!" Ella added eagerly.

The twins had just received new butterfly nets in the mail from their grandparents, who lived far away. Grandpa and Grandma did not see them very often, so they sometimes sent the children special packages. Andrew and Ella had been hoping since yesterday for a chance to play with their new nets, but there had been chores and lessons to do. Today was Saturday, so all that needed to be done was Mom's kitchen jobs. And now that, too, was done.

Mom glanced out the window. The sun was high in the sky, and it was nearly noon. "I think it would be better if you waited until after lunch," she decided. "Why don't you set the table for lunch? We'll be eating soon."

"Yes, ma'am," the twins said together. They hurried to the table. "I'll do cups and napkins," Andrew said. Setting the cups was not his favorite job, but he wanted to please his sister.

Ella smiled at her brother. "Okay! I'll do plates and forks."

With the two working happily together, the table was set in no time at all. Mom again complimented them for their good work ethic. "It makes me happy when you children work well together. It tells me that I can trust you with privileges like playing together. Ella, you may get the leftovers out of the oven; and Andrew, you may run out to the workshop and call Daddy for lunch."

"Yes, ma'am," they said again.

Ella reached for the oven mitts, while Andrew slipped on his shoes and went skipping out the back door toward the workshop.

Soon Dad was indoors, and the family was seated around the table. While they ate lunch, Andrew and Ella chattered about how excited they were to play with their butterfly nets. "I'm going to catch a HUGE butterfly!" declared Andrew. He waved his hands in the air to show how big the butterfly would be.

Ella laughed. "That's nothing! Mine will be THIS big!" She got up on her knees and reached her hands as high into the air as she could.

"Ella, sit down and eat your lunch," Mom reminded her.

"Catching butterflies is not too easy," Dad told the twins. "I used to do it when I was a boy. You might try all afternoon, and only catch one by the end of the day. So be patient."

"Oh, but Dad, there are butterflies all over the yard!" exclaimed Andrew. "Haven't you seen them?"

"Yes, I know, there are lots this time of year, in early spring. But it's still not easy," Dad chuckled. "You'll see what I mean. One thing you must remember, though. When you're chasing a butterfly, don't follow it somewhere where you shouldn't go. If it flies over the street or near the pond, for example, let it go and just look for another one."

The children nodded their heads. "Yes, sir."

After lunch, Mom served the caramel cookies they had baked that morning. The cookies were delicious, but Andrew and Ella were so excited to go outside that they gobbled them down as fast as they could. Mom had to remind them to slow down so they could enjoy their dessert! "We still have to clean the kitchen, so eating faster is not going to make you get outside faster," she said with a smile.

However, after lunch Andrew and Ella helped clean up the kitchen as quickly as they could, and it did not take long at all. As soon as the brooms were put away, Mom said she was going upstairs to do some sewing. Dad put on his hat and returned to the workshop. Andrew and Ella ran to get their butterfly nets. It was finally time to go outside!

"I already see some flying around on those rose bushes," Andrew said, pointing out the window. "I think I'll catch about ten today, Ella."

"I'll catch twenty!" replied Ella. Laughing, they raced each other out the door.

For thirty minutes, they ran around the front yard, chasing butterflies. They quickly learned that Dad had been right. Catching butterflies was NOT

easy at all! Andrew was sure he could catch the tiny green ones fluttering around the rose bushes, but as soon as he put his net down, it seemed they disappeared! Ella spent half an hour running after a large orange and black butterfly. But it just would not land! And whenever it did land, she could not drop her net fast enough before it flew away again.

After thirty minutes, they sank down onto the green grass, tired and panting. The hot sun shone down on them. "I need a break," panted Andrew.

Suddenly, Ella jumped to her feet. "Look!" she squealed, and pointed to the side of the house. "There are two little green ones, flying close to the ground! One for each of us! Come on!"

Andrew was up in a flash and running after his sister. They darted for the side of the house—but as they neared the butterflies, their footsteps slowed. "Shhh, don't scare them," Ella whispered. "Don't let them see us."

The two little butterflies danced playfully in circles near the ground. The children crept closer and closer. On the count of three, they lifted their nets together.

Plop! Andrew's net came down right over one of the little green butterflies!

He gasped with joy. "I caught it!"

"You did!" Ella cried. "Oh! The other one is flying away!"

Andrew left his net on the ground, safely holding his butterfly. Then he looked up into the air, where the other green butterfly was flying away from the house, about five feet off the ground. He looked at his sister's disappointed face. "Don't feel bad. We'll chase it and catch it," he comforted her. "It's not a very fast one. Come on, we can get it!"

Leading the way, Andrew walked quickly behind the butterfly. Ella sprinted along behind him, holding her net high in the air. "As soon as it lands, we'll grab it," Andrew said confidently.

They half-ran, half-walked across the grass. The butterfly fluttered around in the air, right above their heads. It continued moving away from the house. On and on the children followed the butterfly, gazing up at it the whole time. They must not lose track of it!

Suddenly Andrew stopped short in his tracks. "Ella, we're not in our yard anymore," he exclaimed.

Ella stopped, too. She looked around. "Why, you're right! How did we get here?"

All around them, lush green grass spread out. Their own house was far away in the distance. Sure enough, they had wandered into their neighbors'

backyard. "We were looking up at the sky, following the butterfly, and we weren't looking where we were going," Andrew said. "Oh, well. Let's just leave the butterfly and go back. Dad told us not to follow a butterfly somewhere where we shouldn't be."

"But why can't we be here?" Ella sounded disappointed. "I don't want to leave it when you caught yours. Oh, look—it landed!"

True to her words, the butterfly had lightly landed on a bush right next to the neighbor's back porch. It sat there in place, its tiny, beautiful green wings fluttering in the gentle breeze. "I can get it," Ella insisted. "I'm sure of it!" She took a step toward the neighbors' porch.

But Andrew reached out and grabbed his sister's arm. "Don't, Ella," he said. "We shouldn't."

Ella stopped. She looked at her brother. She knew he was right.

"Let's go back home," Andrew said firmly. "Leave it, Ella. We'll find another butterfly. If we can't, I'll give you mine. You know we should obey Daddy, and we shouldn't be on our neighbors' land. It wouldn't be right to go so close to their house without permission."

Slowly, Ella nodded her head. She had to agree with Andrew, even if she was disappointed about leaving the butterfly. It was more important to obey their father than it was to catch a butterfly. Together the children ran across the yard back to their own yard. They were relieved to step back onto their own property again.

For ten minutes, they wandered around the yard, looking for another butterfly. They went to the front yard. They tried the backyard. Then they finally returned to the side yard. They walked in circles around Andrew's net which securely held the tiny green butterfly he had caught. And then suddenly, right before their eyes, a huge butterfly with beautiful orange wings landed on the grass right beside Andrew's net!

The children gasped. "Get it!" Andrew hissed.

Ella did not need to be told. She already had lifted her net in the air. In a split second, her net came down, right over the beautiful orange butterfly. It was trapped inside!

"Hooray! Hooray!" She jumped up and down in excitement. "I'm so glad!"

Andrew's eyes shone. "Good job, Ella! Yours is SO pretty! Oh, I'm so glad we both have one now! Let's pick them up and run out to the workshop to show Daddy!"

The twins bent near the ground. They grabbed their nets, squeezing them shut so the butterflies were stuck in the end of them. Then they ran toward the workshop. Breathless, they burst through the door. But Dad was not in there.

"Where did he go?" Andrew asked, looking confused. "I'm sure he was out here, last I knew. I didn't seem him go inside the house."

They walked back into the yard and glanced around. Then Ella pointed. "Why, look. He's at the neighbors'!"

Andrew looked in surprise. Yes, Dad WAS at the neighbors' house. He and the neighbor man were standing by the back porch—right near the bush where the little green butterfly had landed. Dad was holding a shovel. They were looking at something on the ground.

Just at that moment, Dad turned around and saw the children standing by the workshop. "Come over here, children, and see what Mr. Green and I just killed," he called.

Andrew and Ella set their butterflies back down on the ground. They ran across the yard to the neighbors' yard. As they approached the porch, they slowed down. Dad pointed to a giant, thick, gray rattlesnake lying dead on the ground!

"Look at that monster!" said Mr. Green. "I just stepped onto my porch to take my dog for a walk, and before I could get down the steps, I saw that lying right by the bush! I quickly called your dad so he could help me kill it." He shook his head. "You children better be careful playing outside!"

Andrew and Ella looked at each other with their mouths hanging open. Neither of them said a word, but they were both thinking the same thing. How glad they were now that they had obeyed Dad and not gone after that butterfly! They would have stepped right where that huge snake was. Ella shivered and moved closer to Dad. She was so glad she had listened to Andrew when he told her to do the right thing!

"Pretty big one, isn't it?" said Dad.

The twins nodded. They still did not say anything. But they knew what they would tell Dad, as soon as they got back to their house. They would tell him how thankful they were that they had obeyed him, and not chased a butterfly where they knew they should not go.

-THE END-

WRITTEN BY LIBBY LINDBLOM

JANUARY 5, 2019