



THE LITTLE RED CHAIRS

By Jewelene Carter

(Based on a true story)

“Have faith, have hope, live like his Son, help others on their way” (Children’s Songbook, 34–35).

Helen gazed through the window as the snow swirled outside, and shivered. “*Brrr*, Mama, it’s cold!” she said. She thought about Daddy, who was out working at whatever job he could find on this cold, windy day. “I hope Daddy is all right.”

“I’m sure he will be fine,” Mama said. “Come help me finish kneading this bread before your sister wakes from her nap.”

Helen climbed on a chair and watched Mama push, pound, and roll the ball of dough. She looked over at the beans that had been boiling on the stove all morning, and frowned.

Mama saw her frown and said, “Helen, we are lucky Daddy has work so we have food. And I have a secret,” she whispered. Helen moved closer.

“I have raisins, walnuts, and a little honey for our leftover dough. Let’s make cinnamon rolls!”

“A Christmas gift for Daddy!” Helen said, clapping her

hands. Together they rolled the dough and spread the honey. Helen carefully placed each raisin and walnut as Mama sprinkled cinnamon.

Then Mama said, “Let’s go to the barn while we’re waiting for the rolls to rise and see if the chickens laid any eggs.”

The wind whistled around them as they ran to the barn. When Mama finished placing the last egg into a basket, Helen counted each one. “*Nine* eggs, Mama!”

When they got inside, Helen checked the cinnamon rolls. “Look! They’re perfect,” she said as Mama placed them in the oven. Then they heard a knock at the door.

“Who could that be?” Mama asked.

Helen followed Mama and hid behind her skirt as Mama opened the door. Behind it stood a tired-looking woman holding a couple of red wooden chairs. Helen peeked out from behind Mama.

The woman stepped forward. “I’m selling these little red chairs for one dollar each,” she said.

Helen’s family had something to give—even when times were tough.

Helen let go of Mama’s skirt and touched one of the chairs. She thought how she and her sister would love those chairs. Something behind the woman caught Helen’s eye. A daddy and little children were waiting in an old truck.

Mama wiped her hands on her apron and invited the woman inside. “With these hard times, I don’t have any money to give you,” Mama said. “But I will make you a Christmas trade.”

Mama picked up the basket of eggs and added potatoes to it. Then she took out a clean bucket and filled it with the cooked beans. Helen’s heart felt warm as Mama took out a hot loaf of bread and put it in the basket.

“Thank you,” the woman said softly.

Helen smiled at the woman. The woman put down the red chairs as Mama put a finger over her lips, “This is our Christmas secret, Helen.”

Tears rolled down the woman’s face as she walked with Mama to the door and they wished each other “Merry Christmas.”

On Christmas morning Helen and her sister each unwrapped a little red chair. One leg on Helen’s was a little shorter than the other three. “Look, my very own rocking chair!” This had been the very best Christmas. ♦

The author lives in Alaska, USA.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS STORIES

This story was told to the author by her grandmother Helen Sleight Gurr about a Christmas experience Helen had during the Great Depression.

Ask your parents or grandparents about one of their favorite Christmas memories.