

THE LONG SUMMER

a JJ and Josie story.

On Memorial Day morning, Nate - a student and football player at BCHS - was involved in an accident. He had sideswiped a motorcycle. The driver was thrown to the pavement, and was laying in a pool of blood.

At the first opportunity Nate called his Mom.
His little twin brother and sister, JJ and Josie, listened to Mommy on the phone ...

This true story is told through their eyes.

JJ and JOSIE'S LONG SUMMER

Chapter 1

JJ and Josie looked at the cereal in their bowls. They looked at the gallon of milk. They looked at Mommy. *Mommy* was on the phone ...

JJ put his hand on the gallon of milk. "No, No JJ," said Josie. "... a mess ..."

JJ glared at Josie, "I'm HUNGRY"

Mommy looked over - "**Don't** touch that!" she said

JJ and Josie watched Mommy. "She's *crying*," whispered Josie. "Yeah!" JJ whispered back.

"I'll be right there, we're coming right now... **JJ, Josie, get in the car! ... I'll call ... In the car, NOW!** ... I 'll call as soon as we hang up" **said** Mommy.

JJ and Josie slid off their chairs. "I have to get play clothes on," said Josie. JJ and Josie looked at their pajamas. They weren't allowed outside in pajamas!

In the car, NOW!" said Mommy, making another phone call. "... hit someone ... we don't know if he died or not ... *pray... please pray...*"

Josie picked up her stuffed kitty and started for the garage door. "I'm getting Spiderman!" said JJ, running out of the kitchen and up the stairs to his bedroom.

"James Justice Wyatt!"

JJ froze ... turned and ran back down the stairs. Mommy *never* called him James Justice Wyatt!

"Come *on* Josie," he called, racing past her, pulling open the door, "Mommy's really - angry!"

Josie followed JJ to the car. "You in trouble," said Josie. "Mommy called you James Justice Wyatt."

“Get *in* Josie!” JJ and Josie climbed into their car seats. JJ glanced at Josie. He looked at kitty. “It’s not fair - I want my Spiderman,” JJ pouted.

Mommy came into the garage.

She stopped a minute and stood with her head down before she got into the car.

“Mommy’s still crying,” said Josie. “Her *eyes* are crying,” said JJ, “not her *voice!*”, still upset about being called James Justice Wyatt, and not having Spiderman.

The garage door opened and Mommy backed the car out - really **fast!**

“Seat-belt JJ” said Josie, her eyes wide. Mommy *always* checked their seat-belts. JJ got his seat-belt buckled and saw Josie had slippers on.

JJ looked at his bare feet. “Not fair,” he muttered.

Mommy was driving *really* fast. JJ and Josie looked at each other.

“Where are we going?” they asked.

“NOT NOW!” Mommy said.

‘We’re not going now?!’ JJ and Josie thought.

“Red light” JJ sang out. Mommy slowed down ... a little ... AND THEN KEPT GOING!

“Mommy in trouble,” said Josie.

“Yeah,” said JJ.

“Josie! Look! Police cars!” said JJ.

Josie looked. There were police cars with the lights flashing!

“One, two, three,” Josie counted. JJ glanced at her.

“Listen!” JJ pointed a finger at the roof of the car. “Helicopter!”

Mommy pulled off the road and turned the car off. “Is Daddy here?” Josie asked.

“YOU TWO STAY HERE.” Mommy said firmly, not looking at them as she got out of the car. The door slammed shut. JJ and Josie looked at each other. Mommy *never* left them alone in the car!

They got out of their car seats and scrambled into the front. Peering out the window JJ said, “That’s Nates car!”

“It’s smashed all up!” said Josie, her eyes wide.

“Look Josie look- a motorcycle!” Josie saw the motorcycle laying in the street.

“there’s Grandpa! I’m going to see him.” said JJ, turning to open the door.

“No, no JJ,” said Josie, “You trouble.” JJ sighed and looked out the window again.

“There’s Nate! See Josie? Over there ...” Josie looked. Nate was hugging Mommy. Nate *never* hugged grown-ups. The grown-ups were talking now. “What do they say?” Josie asked JJ.

“I can’t hear ‘em,” said JJ trying to open the window. “It - won’t – open!” He pushed the button harder. He looked at the car keys and reached for them.

“No, no JJ” warned Josie. “You trouble ...”

“**Okay!**” said JJ. “This is so frustrated.”

“Mommy says ‘frustrating,’” corrected Josie.

Mommy’s cell phone rang. JJ and Josie looked at it.

Josie picked it up and pushed the green button. “Hello?” she said sweetly.

“Is Mommy there?” asked Daddy.

“She’s by Nate.” said Josie. “She left us *alone* in the car!”
“I’m almost there.” said Daddy, hanging up. Josie looked at the phone ...

“Josie! Nates shirt!” said JJ.
“It’s all **red**,” said Josie, staring.
“*Blood*,” said JJ, his eyes wide.
Josie burst out crying. “Nates hurt,” she sobbed.
JJ watched her. He started crying too.

They heard the siren and then the police car stopped next to them. DADDY!
JJ and Josie watched as Daddy walked *right past* them. He didn’t even *look* at the car.
Daddy put his arm around Nate and then talked to Mommy and Grandpa.
Mommy was really crying now.

Daddy talked to the other policemen. Nate was swaying from one foot to the other. Mommy was wiping her eyes. Grandpa looked worried. Then Mommy, Grandpa and Nate put their arms around each other’s shoulders and bowed their heads.
“Praying.” stated Josie, wiping her face with kitty.
“Yeah,” said JJ. “Like football.”
Josie looked at JJ a long time. “They don’t have uniforms on,” she said finally.

Mommy was coming back to the car. JJ and Josie got back in their car seats really fast. Nate was getting in a police car - *not* Daddy’s.
Mommy started the car. “Nate’s shirt is all -” said Josie. “- blood “interrupted JJ, “like TV.”
“I’m throwing that shirt out.” said Mommy.
Josie looked at JJ. That was Nates favoritest shirt. JJ shook his head.
“Mommy, I’m hungry,” said JJ.
“McDonalds?” pleaded Josie.

“We’re going to the police station,” said Mommy. “And you two are going to sit really quiet while we talk to the policeman.”
“*We’re* talking to the policeman?” asked JJ and Josie.
Mommy didn’t say anything.

At the police station JJ and Josie started getting out of the car.
“**JJ!** Where are your shoes!”
“You *said* ‘get in the car’” JJ protested.
Mommy looked at Josie’s slippers. She picked up JJ and took Josie’s hand.
“Josie has slippers **and** her kitty,” complained JJ. “I didn’t even get Spiderman.”

Inside the police station Mommy put JJ and Josie on a bench. “STAY HERE. **DON’T** GET OFF THIS BENCH.” Mommy looked at them sternly. Then Daddy came in. Then Nate. Then the policeman. Mommy went by Daddy and Nate. JJ started sliding off the bench, but Daddy gave him *THAT LOOK*. JJ slid back on the bench. Mommy, Daddy, Nate and the policeman went in a room and shut the door. JJ and Josie looked at each other. Mommy and Daddy *never* left them alone in a ...a...a... *place*.

JJ and Josie looked at all the policemen. They looked at all the other people. “Bad guys,” JJ whispered to Josie. Josie hugged kitty.

“Josie, look!” JJ pointed to a machine in the corner. It had food in it. JJ got off the bench.

“No, no JJ,” warned Josie. “You in trouble ...”

JJ whirled around. “I’m HUNGRY” he said, glaring at Josie. Josie was hungry too. She followed him to the big machine. They stared at the potato chips, candy bars, raisons ...

A big policeman, almost as big as Daddy, came over to them.

JJ and Josie looked up at him.

“Where are you kids from?” the policeman asked.

“The bench” said Josie. The policeman looked at the bench.

“We’re hungry,” said Josie explained softly.

“Where are your parents?” the policeman asked. JJ took a deep breath- “IN THE ROOM WITH THE POLICEMAN AND NATE” he said all at once.

The policeman crouched down in front of JJ. “Where?” he asked.

“Over there,” JJ pointed.

“Daddy’s a policeman too,” Josie said. “In Bolton,” JJ added.

The policeman looked first at Josie, then at JJ, then at the machine. “Okay,” he said, putting dollars in the machine, pushing buttons. All the food came out of the machine! Potato chips, candy bars, raisons, - two of each.

“Thank you,” said Josie. JJ’s arms were full. “Back on the bench,” said the policeman, “and this time stay there until your Daddy comes.”

Daddy, Mommy and Nate came out of the room. Daddy came over by JJ and Josie. “Where’d this come from?” he asked, collecting the garbage. Josie pointed. Daddy turned his head, saw the policeman and nodded his thanks.

Daddy crouched down in front of them. “Mommy’s going to take you home now,” he said.

“Don’t give Mommy any trouble and don’t bother Nate, okay?”

“Okay,” said Josie.

“JJ?” “Yeah,” said JJ.

Daddy stood up and talked to Mommy.

“Can we get *up* now?” asked JJ. “No!” said Josie, “No trouble!”

Daddy was saying: “... I have to finish my shift ... I’ll pick something up ... be late ... I’ll get on it tomorrow ...”

Mommy picked up JJ, took Josie’s hand and followed Nate to the car.

Mommy was driving really slow. Nobody was talking, not even the radio.

“You okay ... Nate?” asked Josie. Nate turned his head.

“Not ... really Jos” said Nate. He looked *so* sad. JJ and Josie looked sad then too.

Mommy reached over and put her hand on Nate’s arm.

JJ reached out and put his hand on Josie’s arm.

“Red light,” said JJ softly. Mommy slowed down, and stopped. JJ and Josie looked at each other

and raised their eyebrows.

JJ and Josie ran into the house. Mommy and Nate went upstairs.

They didn't come down.

"What should *we* do?" JJ asked Josie.

They looked at their cereal, still on the table.

"Well," Josie said, "You find food in the 'frigerator and I'll throw out the cereal."

JJ took out cheese, grapes, yogurt, hotdogs, juice boxes ...

Josie dumped the cereal bowls in the garbage. Only a little fell on the floor.

"A mess Josie," said JJ, glancing over.

"What are you two doing?" *Mommy!* "We're still hungry ..." "and thirsty ..."

"Come here by me," said Mommy, holding out her arms.

"Nate and Mommy had a really bad day, but you both helped by being so good."

Mommy hugged them really tight. For a long time.

"Now, you go up and put on your pajamas and Mommy will make supper."

JJ and Josie looked at each other. "We *have* our pajamas on! All day!"

Mommy closed her eyes and shook her head.

"Okay, put clean pajamas on ..." Mommy looked down "... and JJ, wash your feet."

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Mommy had her big Bible.

"That's not our Bible story," Josie said.

"Josie! That's *God's Word*," said JJ.

"Tonight, we're going to read Nates favorite," said Mommy, opening the Bible. [Psalm.23]

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for His name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Nate stood in the doorway and listened.

Chapter 2

JJ and Josie looked at the cereal in their bowls. They looked at the gallon of milk. They looked at Mommy. Mommy was on the phone ... again.

JJ raced upstairs and grabbed Spiderman and his slippers. When he came back Mommy was pouring milk on his cereal. But her eyes were crying.

“... it was terrible, Mom. Blood all over the street, ... Nate ...”

Mommy stopped and came over by JJ and Josie. “Don’t forget ‘Bless this food’” she told them.

JJ and Josie looked at each other. *Mommy* always blessed this food!

“I pray,” said JJ, folding his hands. “God, bless Mommy and Nate and Daddy and Nate and Josie ...” “... and JJ,” interrupted Josie.

JJ opened his eyes and stared at Josie. “... and bless this food amen.”

“Jesus name,” said Josie staring back.

“Mommy! Josie interrupted my praying!” JJ yelled.

“... Nate was coming home from a youth - *just eat your cereal JJ* - group breakfast at you know that church on Orchard. He was passing a motorcycle and I don’t know if it was a bump in the road ... yeah, the road there is really tore up ... or if he misjudged the distance ... yeah, he’s young... not a lot of experience ... but he hit the motorcycle ... two, a man and a woman ... the woman did, but the man didn’t have a helmet ...”

JJ and Josie looked at each other nodding. **No helmet**. They *always* wore their helmets on their bicycles.

“... when the man hit the pavement his head just split open ... (Mommy’s voice was crying now too.) ... Nates car went in the ditch ... Nate ran over to the man and turned him on his side ... yeah, I don’t know **how** he kept calm enough ... there was blood all over and – and - the man’s brains were spilling out ...”

JJ and Josie’s eyes were big. “What’s a brain,” whispered Josie.

“In your head,” said JJ, lifting his spoon and touching his head.

Milk and cereal dripped down the side of his head. Josie’s eyes got *really* big.

She watched the milk and cereal drip down the side of JJ’s head.

“... thank God Nate had his cell ... first 911, then me. ... Mom, I was in shock, threw the kids in the car and got over there as fast as I could ...”

“Without Spiderman,” said JJ under his breath.

“Red light,” remembered Josie

“... there were police cars ...”

“**Three**” Josie said loudly. Mommy looked over at her.

“... three squads, police ...”

“**Helicopter**” said JJ, pointing to the ceiling, spilling more cereal and milk.

“... and a helicopter was just leaving ... yeah, one of those medical ones, they were taking the man ... Good Samaritan I think ... but that was the second helicopter...”

“**Two** helicopters?” JJ asked. Mommy looked over at him.

“... the first one said the man was dead ... (Mommy was crying a lot!) ... the second one ... they said he might be alive ... Mom, we don’t know ... Wes is going to try to find out ... Nate’s so quiet ... really hard, he just went to his room when we got home ... well, yeah, a shower ... he was crying. He said: this is so hard Mom ... He said: why did God let this happen? ... yeah, he knows God has a purpose ...”

“God let it happen *on purpose*?” JJ asked Josie.

“No, no,” answered Josie, “It’s a *accident*.”

“What’s a accident?” asked JJ.

Josie thought a minute. “Nobody trouble.” she finally answered.

“... some counseling,” Mommy said, “He’s going to see Coach today ... I’m going to talk to Coach too ... pretty busy, speed camp, football practice starts next week ... no not today Mom, I have a lot of phone calls to make ... yeah, okay ... I’m sending an e-mail ... pray Mom, for this man, that he doesn’t die and that he’ll have a normal life ... that if he doesn’t know Christ as his savior that he won’t die ... I’m sorry Mom, really emotional right now ... for Nate too, that he’ll feel God’s healing power ...”

“Nate’s hurt?” asked Josie, when Mommy turned off the phone.

“Not on the outside,” said Mommy, “But he hurts on the inside.”

JJ and Josie had *so much* fun!!

They took Nate to Speed Camp.

They played outside *all* day.

Mommy was outside too, but she was on the phone and writing on paper, so ...

JJ took his shoes off.

“No, no - trouble” said Josie, but she took her shoes off too.

JJ watched Mommy not watching them.

They took their bikes out of the garage. “Helmet JJ,” said Josie. “I KNOW,” JJ said, taking his helmet. “Hey - my hair has cereal,” he giggled.

Josie looked at JJ. She said, very serious, “helmet JJ.”

JJ watched Mommy not watching them.

They rode on the street.
They rode all the way down the block.
They rode where the big kids were.
JJ rode with one hand.
“Daddy!” Josie saw Daddy’s truck turn onto their street.
JJ and Josie rode *fast* to their driveway.

Daddy bent down and gave them hugs. “Where’s your shoes?”
JJ made a face and looked at Josie. “We have our helmets,” she said sweetly.
“Did you see they’re out here without shoes?” Daddy asked Mommy.
“PUT YOUR SHOES ON!” Mommy frowned.
JJ and Josie raced to get their shoes on. They heard Mommy and Daddy talk.

Mommy said:
“... on the phone all day ... found a counselor for Nate, if he’ll go ...I talked to Coach ... said he’d watch over Nate ... let us know if he sees any changes ...”

Daddy said:
“... found out ... name is John ... still alive, in a coma ... woman is okay... leg a little banged up ... went home same day ... can’t ask too many questions ...”

Mommy said:
“... we need to know ... NATE needs to know ...”

Daddy looked at Mommy a long time. “I talked to a lawyer.”
“Lawyer?” Mommy questioned.
“We can’t really contact the man or his family. There may be a lawsuit ...”
“*What?*” Mommy asked.

“What’s a lawyer?” Josie asked JJ.
“I think,” JJ thought a minute. “A bad guy. With a suit, like Pastor Andy.”
Josie shook her head. “Andy’s not a bad guy.”
“He yells a lot.” JJ said.

“If this John dies, Nate could be charged with manslaughter,” Daddy was saying.
“Manslaughter!!? Nate??!” Mommy started sobbing really loud.
Daddy hugged Mommy. “Faith hon, Faith.”

JJ and Josie sat really still.
For a long time.

“Okay you two, put your bikes away and come in the house.” Daddy said.
“Take your shoes off before you come in,” instructed Mommy.
“O *man!*” said JJ, “We just put ‘em on!”

JJ and Josie sat on the couch, in their pajamas, watching the shark movie. Their favorite was air shark, great white, bull shark, white tip, black tip, reef ...

Nate walked in, twisting his shoulders.

“Anything?” he asked Mommy.

“The man’s name is John. He’s in a coma” Mommy said.

Nate looked up at the ceiling and took a deep breath.

“How was camp?” Mommy asked.

“Same,” replied Nate.

“Did you talk to Coach?”

“Yeah.” Nate went upstairs.

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Mommy had a blue book in her hand. “That’s not our Bible story,” Josie said.

“We’re going to read this tonight,” Mommy said, opening the book.

JJ looked in the book. “That’s not a story,” said JJ, “that’s a singing book!”

Mommy sang softly:

Be still, my soul: The LORD is by my side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
In every change, the faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best thy heavenly Friend,
Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake,
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake,
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know,
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Nate stood in the doorway and listened.

Chapter 3 [six weeks later]

JJ and Josie looked at the table. No milk. No cereal. Two bananas. They looked at Mommy.

Mommy was on the phone ...

“... Nate’s car’s still impounded ... we don’t know... - JJ, *Josie eat your bananas* - ... yeah, they’re keeping it until he’s charged with something ...”

“**I hate bananas!!**” JJ shouted.

“No hate,” said Josie

Mommy looked over at them. “... no food in the house. I have to go shopping, the kids need haircuts...”

“**Not getting haircut!!**” JJ shouted.

“Trouble JJ,” warned Josie.

“... all day in the car ... stuff for school ... yeah, there’s a sale ... I got the coupons ...”

JJ jumped off his chair. “**I NOT GOING ALL DAY**” He ran out of the kitchen and up the stairs. Josie slowly took a banana and peeled it.

JJ stopped in front of Nates door. Opened it. Nate was sleeping. JJ climbed up on the bed, staring at Nate.

Nate rolled over and squinted at JJ. “What ...” he moaned.

“**I HATE BANANAS HAIRCUT INTHECAR ALLDAY**” said JJ emphatically.

Nate opened his eyes a little- “What??? What – time - is - it?” he asked.

JJ stared at the clock. “It’s on three,” he said. Nate looked at the ceiling.

“JJ, get dressed, we’re leaving soon.” Mommy’s voice came up the stairs.

“**I NOT GOING!**” JJ informed Nate. Nate glanced at him.

“They’re pounding your car,” said JJ, remembering, “and it’s *already* smashed.” Nate stared at him, then shut his eyes and yawned.

JJ leaned over and looked in his mouth. “I don’t see something,” he said finally.

“What???” Nate sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed.

“Mommy said you’re hurting on the *inside*,” JJ explained.

“Yeah,” said Nate, rubbing his face, thinking about his day – counseling - football practice - Coach - have to talk to Dad ...

Nate looked at JJ. “You hurting on the inside too?”

JJ looked down his pajama tops. Thinking ...

“Sometimes you have to be the man, do what you don’t want to do,” Nate said.

“I just a little boy.” said JJ sadly.

Josie stood in the doorway holding JJ ’s Spiderman outfit. “Mommy says you can wear Spiderman,” she said.

JJ suddenly grinned and jumped off the bed. “I can be Spiderman!!” he told Nate.

“Whatever” Nate said, wishing life was that easy.

“This is the *worst* day,” JJ said to Josie.

In the car. Out of the car.

In the store. Out of the store.

Another store. In-out-in-out.

Haircut.

Food store.

“We went to McDonalds,” Josie said.

“Whatever,” said JJ

Finally! They were home! JJ and Josie scrambled out of the car.

“Come here you two,” Mommy said. They came over by Mommy.

“You were both *so* good today,” Mommy said. Mommy looked at JJ. “I know you didn’t want to go ...”

“I hurt on the *inside*,” interrupted JJ.

“Ooookay,” said Mommy, puzzled. “You were a real little man today,” Mommy gave JJ a big hug.

“I’m a little man too,” said Josie.

“No, *you’re* my big girl,” said Mommy giving Josie a hug *and* a kiss.

Josie looked triumphantly at JJ.

“Now,” said Mommy, “help carry these bags into the house.”

JJ and Josie carried their bags into the kitchen. Daddy and Nate were talking. They didn’t even see they were carrying *heavy* bags and *helping* Mommy.

“I don’t know Dad,” Nate was saying, “It’s like he doesn’t have confidence in me. I talk to him but his answers are confusing.”

“I don’t understand either,” said Daddy. “I’ve been involved in sports all my life and I never asked my coaches questions without getting a clear answer.”

“If I do something wrong, he just sits me out. Doesn’t tell me what I did or how to correct it. I ask-”

“- respectfully,” interjected Daddy –

“Yeah,” continued Nate. “I like Coach, I respect him, I admire him, I just don’t know how to handle this anymore. Last year-” Nate didn’t finish the sentence.

“Ask God to give you strength and guidance,” said Daddy. “**He’s** your Coach for life.”

“Yeah Dad. I know. Thanks.”

Nate got up from the table and started to walk away. He turned,

“Anything?” he asked.

“Same,” said Daddy. “He’s still alive, that’s all we know.”

Mommy had come in with lots of bags. She gave Daddy a questioning look. “Go upstairs and get your pajamas on,” Mommy said, still looking at Daddy.

JJ and Josie dropped their bags on the floor. “Want to play!” they said together. Mommy started putting the food away.

“Get your PJs on and you can watch the lion movie,” she said.

LIONS! JJ and Josie raced up the stairs.

JJ and Josie sat on the couch, in their pajamas, watching the lion movie. They were so BIG. They had BIG teeth! They ran SO FAST. “Can they jump out of the TV and eat little kids?” whispered JJ to Josie. “No,” said Josie, thinking. “They’re in -um - Africa” “Where’s *Africa*?” JJ asked.

“I’m going to have a chat with Coach,” Daddy said.

JJ and Josie’s heads turned, looking at Daddy. A **chat!** With **Daddy!**

“Coach - trouble,” said JJ.

“Trouble,” agreed Josie.

“You think you should?” asked Mommy

“He ever call you?” Daddy asked.

“No, no he never did.”

“He knows what’s been going on in Nate’s life. He promised to watch out for him and let us know. He says he cares about the boys on the field *and* off. The least he can do is give Nate a straight answer about football.” Daddy took a deep breath.

“Nate’s been handling it but he’s still confused. Coach is giving him mixed messages.

I just want to clear up any misunderstanding,” Daddy said.

“He’s supposed to be teaching him football.”

Mommy didn’t say anything.

“Nate can’t learn if he isn’t coached.” Daddy continued. “It’s the coaches’ responsibility to communicate with the players, and let them know what’s expected of them. I don’t know what kind of games he’s playing with Nate, but I’m going to find out.”

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Mommy had her big Bible in her hand. “Read a lion story,” Josie said.

“Grrrrr” growled JJ.

Mommy read about Daniel in the lion’s den.

‘Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions.’

“Is the king’s name Coach?” asked JJ.

“They’re going to eat Nate!” Josie started crying.

“No,” said Mommy. “This is about **Daniel**, not **Nathaniel**. Remember?”

“Ok,” said Mommy, looking at JJ and Josie, “listen:”

‘O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?’ Daniel said, “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and

they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before Him ...”

“Josie! The angel shut the lion’s mouth!” said JJ excitedly.

“He protected Nate!” said Josie

Mommy turned to another page. [Psalm 91:9-15]

Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place-
the Most High, who is my refuge-
no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.
For He will command His angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
Because he holds fast to Me in love,
I will deliver him;
I will protect him because he knows My name.
When he calls to me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.

Nate stood in the doorway and listened.

Chapter 4

JJ and Josie looked at the cereal in their bowls. They looked at the gallon of milk. They looked at Mommy. **Daddy** was on the phone...

“Alright ...” Daddy was looking at Mommy. “... I wanted to meet with you in person but we can do this right here, right now. I *never once* mentioned playing time. This isn’t *about* playing time. I would *never* discuss that with a coach. This is about communication ... Nate *has* come and talked with you. You gave him an unclear, confusing response. Instead of immediately correcting something Nate’s doing wrong you wait for weeks. When another running back makes a mistake you have him rerun the play. When Nate makes a mistake you sit him out, without any kind of coaching to correct the situation. If full contact was part of the play, Nate would verify with you before running full contact. Then you would blow the whistle and reprimand him. Nate looked to you to teach him football. You told him you would make him a better running back than he ever thought he could be. You told him he was going to be the starting RB this year, but it seems you’re putting him on the back burner. For whatever reason you’re not communicating with him or letting him know what you expect, especially after making promising statements ...”

Mommy poured milk in the bowls. "Eat your cereal," she said.

"We have to 'bless this food'" said Josie.

"Later," said Mommy, listening to Daddy.

JJ looked at Josie. "Pray to God real soft," he whispered.

"... Nate's looked up to you and suddenly you're playing games with him, causing him immense pain and crushing his spirit ... it seems to me that *God* is not taking Nate through something to put him where *He* wants him, It seems YOU are putting Nate through something to put him where YOU think God wants him ... Nate went through a terrible accident where a human life was almost lost and he's spent time in therapy, in prayer, and in reading the Word. Nate's been dealing with this issue in a way most young men wouldn't have. Through prayer ... God doesn't tell us to guess- HE TOLD US- in His Word how to live and what to expect ... you think *you* care for him!? *You've* been praying for him? That's nothing compared to the love *I* have for my son and it is NOTHING compared to the daily prayers *I* send up for him ... You have no idea what Nate is feeling. We all go through trials, and no two persons are the same. We all make sense of things differently and lean on those we trust the most to help make sense of it. Nate trusted you ... don't respond to me, respond to Nate ... no, no he doesn't, and I'd prefer he doesn't know about this phone call ..."

Daddy turned off the phone. JJ and Josie watched him with wide eyes. Daddy looked at each of them. "Don't say anything to your brother." he warned.

Mommy and Daddy went outside and left JJ and Josie to eat their cereal.

"Yuck!" said JJ. "It's all soft!" He pushed his bowl away, spilling on the table.

Josie sighed. "Trouble JJ," she said, "a mess."

"We're going to the zoo!" announced Mommy.

THE ZOO!!!

JJ and Josie raced upstairs to get dressed.

"Sharks!" shouted JJ.

"Lions!" shouted Josie.

There were bears and giraffes.

Elephants and zebras.

Snakes and monkeys.

"Is this Africa?" asked Josie

"Where's the *lions*?" asked JJ. He stopped suddenly. "Josie! Listen! Lions!"

"Where are they?" JJ and Josie turned in circles. The loud sound was all around them.

They looked at the lions. "Can they get out and eat little kids?" JJ asked.

"No," said Daddy. "This is a window," Daddy knocked on the glass, "they can't get through this." JJ and Josie slowly walked up to the window. The lions were sooo BIG!

JJ looked at Josie and then carefully put his face on the glass. "See Josie, they can't bite me," he looked out of the corner of his eye at Josie. Josie wouldn't come any closer.

“Where’s the *sharks*?” Josie asked.

“No sharks,” said Mommy, “but there’s dolphins, we can watch them swim under water.”

“I’m not going in the water,” said Josie.

“We’ll look through the window, like with the lions,” Mommy explained.

“Come *on* Josie,” yelled JJ starting to run. Then he stopped. “Where we go?” he asked.

There were BIG dolphins and seals and penguins. They were all swimming under water. They came *right by* the window! JJ and Josie both pressed their noses against the glass. They stayed there a long time. JJ and Josie each got a plastic shark to take home.

“What are those?!” JJ pointed at the big birds. “Eagles,” said Daddy.

“Like football?” JJ asked.

“Like Nates helmet?” asked Josie.

“Nates team is named after these big eagles,” explained Mommy.

One of the eagles stretched out his wings. “Like a airplane!” said JJ.

“Can it fly?” asked Josie. “They fly so high you can hardly see ‘em,” said Daddy.

“Like a airplane,” JJ nodded.

They had hotdogs and potato chips.

They had ice cream and popcorn.

They had a pony ride.

They saw all the baby animals.

They had cotton candy.

They had juice and another hotdog.

JJ and Josie slept *almost* all the way home, holding their sharks.

But they were wide awake when they *got* home. “Hope they sleep tonight.” Mommy said to Daddy. “Don’t count on it,” Daddy said, looking back at JJ and Josie.

“NATE, NATE,” shouted JJ and Josie as Nate came in the door, “We saw bears -”

“- and elephants -” “- and lions -” “- and dolphins -” “- snakes -” “- monkeys -”

“and and eagles!!” said JJ and Josie.

“Like *airplanes*-” JJ ran around with arms stretched out.

Nate picked him up and swung him around.

“How was practice?” Daddy asked.

“Good,” Nate grinned at Daddy.

“Look at me, look at me!” JJ yelled.

“I want to be a airplane too,” Josie said. Nate put JJ down and picked Josie up.

“I ran some plays,” Nate said, swooping Josie up and down. “We ran sprints on the clock ...”

“I’m a eagle!!” Josie squealed, “I’m a eagle!!”

“... Coach said I’m the fastest kid he ever coached -”

“**Really!**” said Mommy. Nate grinned at Mommy.

“I want to be a eagle!” said JJ. Nate put Josie down and picked JJ up, spinning him around.
“Me too!” said Josie. Nate picked up Josie and swung her over his head before putting her down next to JJ.

Nate got the gallon of milk out of the refrigerator and gulped some down. “Dean is picking me up -” he took another gulp “-we’re going to the pool -” another gulp ...

JJ and Josie watched Nate. Mommy didn’t even say ‘no no’.

“- won’t be gone long -” gulp “- early speed camp, no practice -” gulp “--Family Football Meeting tomorrow night.” Nate put the milk back in the refrigerator.

JJ and Josie looked at Mommy. She wasn’t saying *anything*.

“I’m on night shift,” Daddy said.

“I forgot about that meeting,” Mommy said, looking at JJ and Josie, thinking.

“Whatever,” said Nate, heading upstairs.

He spun around, suddenly serious. “Anything?”

Daddy shook his head. “Same.”

Mommy and Daddy were smiling at each other. “Thanks hon,” said Mommy.

“Thank you, Daddy!!” yelled JJ and Josie, “for the zoo!!”

Daddy smiled even bigger.

JJ went to the refrigerator and took out the almost empty gallon of milk.

“JJ! Put that back!” Mommy said. “Well – Nate -” complained JJ.

“Nates big and you’re little,” said Mommy. Josie nodded.

“Whatever,” muttered JJ, glaring at Josie.

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Mommy had her big Bible in her hand.

“Listen -Nate home -” said Josie. “Let’s see him!” said JJ, starting to get up.

“Don’t ...” Mommy warned. JJ and Josie slid back under the covers.

“Read a eagle story,” said Josie. “Why there’s no pictures?” JJ asked.

“Grownup Bibles don’t have pictures,” said Mommy, looking for a page.

“I want a grownup Bible,” JJ and Josie said together.

“Ask Grandma,” said Mommy.

Mommy started to read: [Isaiah 40:28-31]

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;

His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might He increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary,
And young men shall fall exhausted;
But they who wait for the LORD
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles;
They shall run and not be weary;
They shall walk and not faint.

Nate stood in the doorway and listened.

Chapter 5

JJ and Josie looked at the cereal in their bowls. They looked at the gallon of milk. They looked at Mommy. Mommy was on the phone ...

“... It’s okay Mom, I’ll just take them with ... really, it’ll be fine ... no, I forgot or I would have called earlier ...”

“Mommy ‘bless this food’” said Josie. Mommy held up her hand.

“I pray,” said JJ, folding his hands and closing his eyes. Josie folded her hands, watching JJ.

“... do you have any of those little Bibles? ... No, for the twins ... they don’t want pictures ... JJ’s praying, he’s such a little man ... yeah, I have to do laundry ... Nate? He’s, well, better today ... I know, I know ...”

“... amen.” JJ gave Josie a really big smile.

“Well-*I* a big girl,” said Josie

The gym was full of people. It was really noisy.

Mommy gripped JJ and Josie’s hands really tight!

“You hurting my hand!” JJ protested. Mommy just kept walking.

There were three chairs. Mommy put JJ and Josie next to each other. “Sit quiet,” said Mommy.

JJ and Josie looked around. *Everyone* was talking. Real *loud*.

JJ and Josie gave each other their thinking look.

JJ and Josie stood on their chairs.

They looked around. “No kids,” JJ said to Josie.

“This is grown-ups!” Josie said.

Everyone started to sit down. “SIT DOWN,” Mommy said firmly.

Suddenly Josie saw someone she knew! “**JJ, look, Nate!!**” Josie said loudly.

“Shhhh,” said Mommy frowning. “Nate’s sitting with the team.”

JJ stood on his chair, waving his arms- “**NATE! NATE!**” JJ yelled as loud as he could. Nate turned around and grinned at JJ.

“He sees me!” JJ said.

“SIT DOWN,” repeated Mommy.

A man got up in front of everyone and started praying. “Is this church?” JJ asked Josie.

“Shhhh” whispered Josie.

Then Coach got up. JJ and Josie sat on their knees so they could see him.

“A few months ago,” Coach said, “we met in this auditorium to ask God for a football field. We asked our Great God not for just any football field, but for the best; not a grass field, but turf. With lights.” Coach paused and looked out at all the families.

“We had an organization that would put up \$500,000 if we could come up with \$500,000. We had six weeks to raise the money. We’re not wealthy people. Most of our parents struggle to send their kids to BCHS. We don’t have many deep pockets. We asked our Great and Good God to provide for us.” Coach took a deep breath.

“The day before the dead-line we were a little more than \$20,000 short of our goal. All of you had given, had sacrificed to give. Our God is Great and Good, even if we didn’t get a football field.” Coach stopped, his voice breaking.

“On the last day, we opened the mail. There were a lot of envelopes- a **lot** of envelopes. As we opened them, checks started spilling out. That day, that *last* day, we received just over \$20,000!! Our Great, Good, and Faithful God had just given us a football field!!”

JJ and Josie looked around. *Everyone* was standing up and cheering! JJ and Josie stood up on their chairs. “SIT DOWN,” Mommy said- but she was standing too.

Everyone sat down as Coach began to speak again. “Football at BCHS isn’t *just* about football,” he said. “It’s *primarily* about faith. It’s about strength and courage, not just on the field, but about a strong faith in Jesus Christ and the courage to live that faith.”

Another man came up. “I’ve asked my friend and Pastor to say a few words to the team and their families.” Coach sat down as a big curtain opened behind the man.

“JJ, look!” Josie pointed, “a little house!”

“I see it!” said JJ excitedly.

“Shhhh,” Mommy said.

“I want to thank Coach for this time to talk to all of you,” the man said. He pointed his hand at the parents. “First to you fathers, then -” he gestured to the team - “to the boys.”

“The most *important* job of a father is to **protect** his family. Raise your hand if you agree.”

JJ and Josie looked around. All the Daddy's raised their hands.

"Our families are surrounded by a *cesspool* of evil. Immorality is on billboards, store windows, advertising. Sin is tolerated. Evil is accepted. The result in our communities is obvious. We don't always see the impact on our families."

"The **largest abortion clinic** in the *country* just opened in *our* community. There are **Casinos**. Neighborhood theaters show **r** and **x rated movies**. Even PG-13 movies subtly promote immorality. He held up a little black book. "This *book* is **required reading** in our public schools. It's all about **hooking-up**, opposite sex, same sex-----*500 pages*----every page has the **F word** at least twice." He dropped the book on the floor with a thud. "Our families, your families, are surrounded with **evil**." He looked out at them. "*How* do you protect them?!" "You're here, so you've chosen to protect your children by sending them to BCHS, and I commend you - but it's your *home*," he turned and pointed to the little house, "your **home** that is surrounded by a raging *cesspool* of evil. It is your home that you *can* protect, your home that you have a *responsibility* to protect! **Evil** is like a roaring lion, looking to devour your family!"

JJ and Josie's eyes got really big. LIONS! EVIL!

"This cesspool is lapping at the foundation of your home. If it cannot get inside - if it cannot seep through the walls -" the man paused, "- then you, as fathers, have done much to protect your homes and your families."

"HOW do you protect your family? By not letting *anything evil* in!"

"**Block** internet sites. Not 'parental control', block it so *you* can't access those sites either... there are almost 50 *million* pornographic websites. 75-80 *million* people visit these sites - in America - each month! Are *you* one of them? Are you being *devoured*? Are you putting *your family* in the lions' mouth?"

"Cable TV. **Cancel** the stations that carry evil - you know which ones. Some of you are watching them yourselves - late at night -"

"Locking the door at night won't protect your children, your families, from evil. A home security system won't keep evil from seeping in. **You** can stop the flow of evil into your homes."

HOW do you protect your family? By throwing *everything evil out!*

The man went in the little house and carried out a stack of books. He dropped them on the floor.

"BOOKS!" he said.

He carried out an armful of DVD'S; they scattered over the floor.

"DVD'S!" he said.

He carried out magazines, and poured them on the floor.

"MAGAZINES!"

He carried out CD'S. They fell on the magazines.

"CD'S!"

“PICTURES!”

“A **mess!!**” said Josie

“Yeah!” said JJ. This was *fun!!*

The man kicked his way through the mess. “I’m challenging all you fathers here tonight to **keep evil out** of your homes. To **throw evil out** of your homes.”

He waited before he spoke again.

“I’m challenging all you fathers here tonight to make a public commitment - ” He paused - “I’m challenging you to stand up, right now, and make this commitment to your families.”

He waited ... and waited ... and waited ...

JJ and Josie looked around. *Nobody* was standing up.

JJ started to stand on his chair so he could see better.

“SIT DOWN,” said Mommy.

Then, way in the front, someone stood up. And another, a few more ...

“Nates standing up!” said JJ.

Mommy looked. Almost the whole team was standing. Not all, but most. They were the only ones. Mommy’s eyes were crying.

The man watched. He walked over to them. He said, softly, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Then the man talked so soft JJ and Josie couldn’t hear him.

Coach came up to the front. “In a few weeks,” he said loudly, “we’ll see all of you as we dedicate the **BCHS Football Field**. It’s going to be a great night of praise for our Awesome God. And these *young men* -” he gestured toward the team - “are going to take to the field with strength and courage and faith -” Coach suddenly stopped speaking.

As he walked over to the team, people started to leave. There was no noise.

JJ and Josie didn’t say anything. Coach had the team in a huddle.

“**FOR HIM!**” The shout resounded off the ceiling.

JJ and Josie looked. The team had their hands up, pointing to *God*.

“FOR HIM!” JJ and Josie said, as loud as they could.

Riding home was so quiet! Mommy - not talking. Nate - not talking.

JJ looked at Josie. “*lion movie*,” Josie whispered. JJs’ eyes got big.

“Are you throwing out the **lion** movie?” JJ asked.

“No,” said Mommy.
JJ looked at Josie. “*sharks*,” she whispered.
“The **shark** movie?” JJ asked.
“Why would I throw out your movies?” asked Mommy, puzzled, looking back at JJ.
“What about the **evil**?” JJ asked, “in the **house**?”
Josie thought about the mess.
Nate turned around. “I’m **on** it,” he said to JJ.
JJ looked at Josie. “No mess,” Josie whispered.
“No fun,” JJ whispered back.

“You two go upstairs and get your pajamas on,” Mommy said as they walked in the door.
“ON IT” yelled JJ as he raced up the stairs.
“Anything?” Josie heard Nate ask Mommy.
“Same,” said Mommy, looking sad.
“Upstairs Josie,” said Mommy.

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Mommy had her big Bible in her hand. JJ and Josie were almost asleep.

Mommy read: [Joshua 23:6; 24:14; 1:9]

Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Now therefore fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness.
Put away the gods that your fathers served ... and serve the LORD.

Choose this day whom you will serve ...
But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed,
for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Nate stood in the doorway and listened.

Chapter 6

[three weeks later]

JJ and Josie ate their cereal. Mommy *wasn't* on the phone; she was talking with Nate.
Nate took the milk off the table - he gulped some down.

JJ and Josie looked at Mommy.

Mommy said: "Big night tonight"

"Yep" said Nate, before taking another gulp.

"Lot of people going to be there," Mommy said.

"Yep," said Nate, between gulps.

"Coach say what position you're going to play?"

"Yep," said Nate, "Special teams."

"Nate special!" said Josie.

"Yep!" said JJ

Nate grinned, took another gulp, and put the empty milk carton on the table.

Nate looked at Mommy, his face was serious now. "Anything?"

Mommy shook her head. "Same." Mommy looked down, "this has been a long summer."

"Long summer," JJ and Josie whispered.

JJ and Josie dragged their bikes out of the garage. "Helmet JJ," said Josie

"DON'T TALK ME!" said JJ getting off his bike and putting on his helmet.

"Do not go on the street!" said Mommy. "If I see you on the street, you're getting a TIME OUT," she warned.

JJ and Josie rode up and down the driveway. They went back and forth on the sidewalk. JJ kept looking at Mommy. Mommy and Nate were talking. Mommy was looking at Nate. Mommy wasn't looking at **them**.

JJ and Josie went down the driveway, up the sidewalk - and turned onto the street.

"**JJ! Josie!** Get off that street! **NOW!**"

Josie glared at JJ.

JJ and Josie rode up the driveway.

"There's a *car* coming!" Mommy said, pointing to the step. "TIME OUT!"

JJ dropped his bike and threw his helmet in the grass.

Josie carefully hung *her* helmet on her bike.

The car stopped in front of their house. It was *Aunt Mary!* JJ and Josie jumped up.

"SIT DOWN," said Mommy firmly. Why was Aunt Mary here? She - almost - never came over.

"I have a story to tell you!" Aunt Mary was smiling.

A Story!! Aunt Mary told the **best** stories.

"It must be a good one," Mommy said, "For you to come all this way..."

"Yesterday," said Aunt Mary, looking at each of them, "we had a picnic."

A *picnic*! Picnics were *fun*! “Can we come?” pleaded Josie.
“It was yesterday,” explained Aunt Mary, looking at them.

“During the picnic our neighbor, who we hadn’t seen all summer, was leaning over the back fence. Uncle John walked over to find out where he’d been.
When Uncle John came back, he had a stunned look on his face.
‘We have to go over to the neighbors tonight,’ Uncle John told me.”

“So, after everybody left, we walked over and he told us about his long summer.”

Aunt Mary paused, “He had been in an accident.”

“Did his brains fall out?” asked Josie.

“**JOCELYN JOY!**” Mommy said sternly.

Nates’ head fell to his chest.

“He had someone there to help him,” Aunt Mary told Josie.

“They airlifted him to the hospital ...”

“In a *helicopter*?” asked JJ.

“Yes, in a helicopter,” Aunt Mary nodded.

“When they got there, they called a priest to give him last rites,” Aunt Mary continued.

“What’s a priest?” asked Josie.

“What’s last rites?” asked JJ.

Mommy explained: “A priest is like Pastor Andy. They give last rites if they think someone is going to die.”

“They told his family that if he survived, he’d be like a vegetable,” Aunt Mary said.

“Like a carrot?” asked Josie

Aunt Mary studied Josie’s face. “With people it’s when they can’t think or feel.”

“A carrot on the inside,” JJ said, understanding.

“Did I mention they took him to Good Samaritan Hospital?” asked Aunt Mary.

“He was in a coma for five days, and then in an induced coma for several weeks”

Mommy was staring at Aunt Mary.

Nate had lifted his head and was staring at Aunt Mary too.

“When he woke up, he was, well, *almost* fine - he had some memory loss.” Aunt Mary was smiling again. “He was brought to Marionjoy for re-hab and therapy.”

“What’s Mary-joy?” asked Josie.

“What’s therapy?” asked JJ.

“Shhh!” said Mommy, not looking at them.

“He said his kids ran his business while he was recovering, and the business made more money than ever before! He said his kids told him of all the experiences they had when they were teenagers. He talked about the ‘young man’ who had hit him. He said most teenagers would have run or stood helplessly by, whereas this ‘young man’ had thought clearly and done what he could to help. His kids had told him that this ‘young man’ had run *to* him, and when he saw he

was choking in his own blood, had turned him so he could breathe.” Aunt Mary looked at Mommy. Mommy’s eyes were filled with tears.

“He said that somebody must have been praying for him - *he has no idea how many people were praying!* He said his accident brought him closer to God. He called his priest and said he had to take back the last rites, that he was alive and well!!”

Nate was staring intently at Aunt Mary.

Mommy didn’t say anything. She just stared with tears shining in her eyes.

Aunt Mary’s eyes had tears too, even though she was still smiling.

“Did I mention his name is John?” Aunt Mary asked.

Everyone was talking at the same time! Laughing talking! Crying talking!

“MAN IN ACCIDENT ON HELICOPTER TO HOSPITAL NOT HURT NAME JOHN” JJ summarized loudly, jumping up and down. Everyone stopped talking and looked at him.

Nate put his head back and raised his eyes to heaven.

“Talking to *God*,” whispered Josie.

JJ put his head back and looked up too.

Nate stood up with the biggest grin. “Got to call Dad,” he said, nodding at Aunt Mary, his eyes showing his gratitude, and going in the house.

JJ and Josie slid off the step and started to walk, quietly, toward their bikes.

“Get back here!” they heard Mommy say sternly, “you’re still in TIME OUT.”

Josie glared at JJ as they sat back down.

“You on the street too!” JJ glared back at her.

“Thank you. Thanks, so much Aunt Mary, for coming out,” said Mommy.

“I’m just the messenger,” replied Aunt Mary, her eyes twinkling.

“Our neighbor, John, said he wasn’t going to sue.” said Aunt Mary, serious again. “Uncle John asked him twice. He again said no, he wasn’t going to sue anybody. He said he was very concerned about how the ‘young man’ was doing. We finally told him the ‘young man’ was our nieces’ son. He said he’d like to meet him. He was worried - said he knew how hard it would be on someone, especially as young as Nate.”

“Tell him, ... tell him Nate will be okay. Tell him God is healing him too.” said Mommy.

“God is so Awesome!” Mommy exclaimed. “Remember the first e-mail I sent? Asking for prayer? To pray that the man would not only survive, but have a normal healthy life? Praise God! He has answered our prayers in *every* detail!

“God *is* Awesome,” Aunt Mary agreed, still smiling.

“Awesome!” repeated JJ and Josie.

***OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD...
HE REIGNS... FROM HEAVEN ABOVE***

Sang the loudspeaker.

“**AWESOME GOD**” sang JJ and Josie as they ran around under the bleachers’ at the side of the football field. “**HEAVEN ABOVE**” they sang, chasing each other.

***WITH WISDOM POWER AND LOVE...
OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD***

“**POWER LOVE**” they sang running under the stairs. “**AWESOME GOD**”

“**JJ - JOSIE**” Mommy called. JJ and Josie ran to Mommy and Daddy.

“We have to get seats, there are so many people here,” Daddy said to Mommy as they pushed their way up the stairs to the bleacher seats.

JJ and Josie jumped up and down on the bleachers.

“You’re going to fall through,” warned Mommy.

JJ and Josie peered down at the ground where they had been playing. It was *scary!*

They sat down between Mommy and Daddy looking around excitedly.

JJ and Josie’s eyes were dancing as they looked at all the people.

“**There’s Great-Grandma!**” Josie yelled.

“**Great-Grandpa! Great-Grandma!**” shouted JJ.

Daddy stood up so Great-Grandpa and Great-Grandma could find them.

“The *whole world* is here!” said JJ.

***OUR GOD IS FAITHFUL...
OUR GOD IS HEALER....***

“**HEALER**” sang JJ and Josie. Mommy and Daddy smiled happily at each other.

The singing music stopped and the loud speaker started playing drums.

LET’S GIVE IT UP FOR THE BOLTON EAGLES!!!

Everyone stood up cheering and clapping and making lots of noise!! The loudspeaker was saying something, but no-one could hear!

“**I CAN’T SEE**” JJ yelled as loud as he could.

Daddy scooped up JJ and Josie, one in each arm. They could see the team running onto the

football field, one at a time. “There’s Nate,” Daddy said.
“NATE! NATE!” JJ and Josie shouted, but Nate couldn’t hear them.

The drum music stopped and the loudspeaker started playing music - softly. All the people sat down and everything was really quiet. JJ and Josie watched as Nate and all the team took off their helmets, knelt down on one knee, and bowed their heads.
JJ took off his Spiderman hat; Josie folded her hands.

ALMIGHTY GOD prayed the loudspeaker WE HUMBLY OFFER YOU OUR PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING. AS YOU LOOK DOWN ON US THIS NIGHT... JJ and Josie peered up at the sky ... WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE, YOUR MERCY, AND YOUR SALVATION - OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN WHOSE NAME WE PRAY - AND TO WHOM WE DEDICATE THIS FIELD. WE PRAISE YOU FOR BEING WITH US TONIGHT... “Jesus is *here*” Josie whispered. JJ and Josie looked all around, at all the people. ... WE PRAISE YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS, YOUR GOODNESS. WE ASK YOUR BLESSING...

The lights on the field came on. The scoreboard lit up. It read:

FOR CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

Mommy tucked the covers in around JJ and Josie. Daddy had the big Bible in his hand. “Where Nate?” Josie asked sleepily. “Celebrating with the team,” Daddy said, as he opened the Bible.

JJ stared at the doorway as Daddy read: [Psalm 145:1-6]

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You
and praise Your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD,
and greatly to be praised,
and His greatness is unsearchable.
One generation shall commend
Your works to another,
and shall declare Your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
and on Your wondrous works,
I will meditate.
They shall speak of the might of Your awesome deeds,
And I will declare Your greatness.

A light glowed softly in the doorway, listening.