

Chapter 5

Timmy, The First Boyfriend

The next year Gracie made a friend named Timmy. The kids all teased her and Timmy “Gracie has a boy friend” over and over. Timmy didn’t seem to mind and she felt special. So there! He lived in the same trailer park as Gracie. He walked with her to the school bus every day. They were great friends. Timmy was shorter than Gracie but that didn’t matter to Timmy. They told each other secrets. To keep Gracie safe he would hold her hand and carry her lunch. After school they would play fort. All the girls in school were jealous because Timmy was the cutest boy in her class. He had beautiful blond hair, and dark brown eyes with thick dark lashes. The best thing about Timmy was that he made Gracie laugh. She was happy, she had a real friend, and she was cute again. Timmy would share the candy and cookies from his lunch with her. When had anything tasted so good? She had never been allowed to eat a lot of sweets except when her grandmother sent cookies from Minnesota. Her mother said eating candy is not good for little girls. She heard her mother say over and over Gracie “You have to eat your vegetables and clean your plate. Yet another lesson. Young girls have to eat right it’s important they have a good figure. Gracie I expect you to make a good match. Someone socially prominent. Good eating habits are important.

Timmy always let her have the biggest cookie or the last piece of candy. Timmy was just the best friend, he would always agree with Gracie and tell her she was smart. Timmy also thought she was cute. He said she was the prettiest girl in school. Gracie still has a picture of them going off to school together. Soon Gracie always raised her hand to answer the teacher’s questions in class. Now she was always “showing off” according to her mother.

Soon even the Mother Superior liked Gracie. She was becoming everyone’s favorite. The kids called her teacher’s pet. Her report cards showed all A’s. The nuns made little notes in the report cards saying Gracie is very smart. Her only area that needs improvement is her deportment. She always talks too much in class and gets into trouble. What a little imp she is, it’s hard to be mad at her for very long. She makes everyone laugh with her silly stories. Her father told her he was proud of her. Her mother just looked suspicious. Gracie had won! She wasn’t slow. The nuns and the school children liked her. Now if I could only improve in obedience training. I have to improve my grade in deportment. Then I’ll be perfect and everyone will love me. I need help God help me, give me the gift of obedience. There everyone should be happy with that prayer.

Timmy and Gracie both loved Jelly Beans. They would save their pennies and buy a bag of Jelly Beans and not share with any one else at

school. Gracie was becoming a spoiled little princess. She just knew she was a special child. In school she got her way all the time. Everyone wanted to be her friend.

One day just before school ended Timmy told Gracie some bad news. He and his whole family were moving to Iowa. Timmy was moving away. She was losing her best friend. The day Timmy finally left was the worst day, even worse than when her pet horny toad Georgie died. Timmy had to move away because his father got a job in Iowa. As she watched the trailer drive away with her boyfriend Timmy waving goodbye from the back window, Gracie wondered. I wish Tommy's house didn't have wheels. "Who will be my best friend now?" Who will make me laugh now that Timmy is leaving? Timmy had been a real friend, not like those snobby girls at school. They liked you one day and the next day they wouldn't talk to you. She didn't even want to go to their stupid birthday parties. That night she couldn't eat her dinner, not even her ice cream. Gracie just went to bed and cried herself to sleep.

Chapter 6

Little Iodine. Gracie the Movie Star?

That same year just after Timmy left, Gracie was told movie people were at her house talking to her parents. Gracie knew about the movies, they were very exciting pretend stories. You had to go to a movie theater to see the special moving pictures. Pictures that moved. How did they do that? She hadn't been to a movie, they cost too much. She wanted to go to a movie so she could talk about the movie stars too. All the kids at school dreamed about becoming a movie star. This was Southern California where Hollywood was located. What could she do? Could she make some money, get a job in the movies?

The snotty girls at school had told her about movies. They said it was too bad her family was so poor. You will never be able to see Shirley Temple, their favorite star,. She was everyone's favorite, a real movie princess. Gracie began to pretend her makeup stories were movies. Could movie people really want to talk to her about starring in a real movie? It seemed too good to be true. Her father told her a talent scout had seen Gracie when he had picked up his daughter at school just a couple weeks ago. The movie man told her parents she was cute enough to be a movie star. The talent scout wanted to know if they would let Gracie try out for the part of "Little Iodine" in a movie about the cartoon character. Her father told the man he had read the comic strip Little Iodine, she was always getting her dad and herself in trouble. He laughed and said Gracie was born for the part. Gracie learned Little Iodine was always getting into trouble just like she was. I can do that! It won't even be acting. Would she really become a movie star? Could she change her name? What should I call myself she wondered? Chloe Starr, Rita Ross, Joyce Jewell, Magdalene Marr or maybe Belle Swell. The possibilities were endless. I'll be more famous than Shirley Temple. Then I will never have to worry about those snotty girls in school not liking me because I'm poor. Being poor is a real challenge but being satisfied and happy with what you have is a real gift.

Gracie wanted to be Little Iodine, the movie star in the worst way. What little girl wouldn't want to be famous like Shirley Temple? Maybe she would meet the famous actress someday. This was her impossible dream would it come true? I'll be famous like Shirley Temple everyone will love me she thought. Timmy could go see her in the movies, even in Iowa. He would be so surprised to see his friend a successful movie star. My mother would be proud of a movie star daughter. Finally my mother would accept me and love me. I can just never seem to make my mother love me no matter what I do. That's one of the main reasons I call myself My Lone.

Chapter 7

A Promise Of A Job In Oregon

At supper that night she heard the bad news. Her father announced they were moving to Oregon. He had a good job offer. He had been hired to work on a big project to build a dam. They would probably stay in one place for three whole years. They would live in a house. Her father said he was tired of moving all the time and with the new baby coming it would be wonderful to have more space. Her father sat down to talk alone to Gracie, later that night. She was told this was a very important opportunity. Her father said he was sorry but he couldn't take a chance his little carrot top would become a movie star. What an incredible idea. It's true she was cute, but he didn't think she could act. You can't even sit still for an hour. I just don't think they will choose you Gracie. There are lots of cute girls in the world he said to her. I think you are special Gracie, you are my little carrot top and a wonderful little girl. Unfortunately not everyone sees the little girl I see. So the Good family would all move to Oregon. Gracie would never get a chance to be "Little Iodine."

About this time her mother had another baby girl. Her parents named the new baby Lucy. Gracie now had a little baby sister. She wasn't the baby of the family any more. Gracie asked her mother, "Are you mad because Lucy isn't a boy either?" I know you don't love me because I'm not a boy. Aren't you going to love her either? Her mother slapped Gracie. "Gracie go to your room this instant." Such insolence, why did I have such a challenging child? I don't want you in my sight right now. Your father will speak to you when he gets home. Why do you ask such impertinent questions? Of course we all love the new baby. I'm ashamed of you for suggesting I don't love Lucy. I just hope she is a sweet quiet child like your cousin Linda. I don't know how I will handle raising three girls? Did you hear me go to your room I don't want to see you again all day. Gracie rubbed her cheek but didn't cry. Gracie knew her mother and father wanted a boy. Was her mother lying?

That night her father told Gracie again he was sorry she didn't get to be a movie star. You must forget about the movies. You were a naughty little girl today. You deserve a spanking. He didn't want her suggesting her mother didn't love her sister Lucy. You have to love your new baby sister and your mother. You should never suggest your mother isn't a loving mother. You must never tell other people, especially at school, that your mother is mean to you. People will misunderstand what you are saying to them. They will think your mother should be investigated for abusing her children. Never tell them your mother slapped you. You don't want to harm your mother do you? You must try to understand. Your mother is high strung. I want you to tell your mother you are sorry. You have to forgive your mother for slapping you. Learning to forgive is a very important lesson. God's children must learn to

be grown up. Yes, she has some problems but she tries to be a good mother. You must not talk back to her. She worries about what you tell your teachers. Do you tell them you hate your mother? “No father”, she said. Do you understand me Gracie? Your mother didn’t mean to slap you “Yes father”. You know, we both love all of our children. I especially love you my little carrot top. I want you to be good and help your mother. Your mother just had another baby and she is very tired. You must ask for her forgiveness.

He told her again they had to have security. They have a new member in the Good family. Everything costs more money. This new job means a “steady paycheck”. “Taking the job in Oregon was the sensible thing to do Gracie” I hope you will try to understand. You can’t be a movie star. Gracie just wanted her father to stop explaining. Would Gracie learn how to forgive, that would be a wonderful gift. A gift she could use all her life.

What a sad day for Gracie. She had to forget about the movies. Cute wasn’t enough. She wasn’t special enough. Her father had said she wouldn’t have been successful. There were too many other cute children who knew how to act to choose her. She wouldn’t get a chance to be Belle Swell, the child movie star. Gracie couldn’t help but wonder, did her father love the new baby more than he loved her? She wasn’t his little baby carrot top anymore. He had Lucy now. That night as she cried herself to sleep, she just knew she would have made a wonderful movie star. The movie man was right. Acting was pretending and Gracie pretended all the time. She always pretended her mother loved her. She thought herself I’m beginning to cry as much as baby do. I’m a big girl I have to learn to stop crying so much.

Chapter 8

Cousin Wally teaches Gracie about Gambling

Gracie learned her father's job wouldn't start in Oregon for two months. The Good family would park their trailer at their cousins house in the driveway. How strange to have a parking meters in front of your house. They would live in Van Nuys California. They couldn't even stay for Christmas. Her mother Helen's sister was her Aunt Berta. Aunt Berta and Uncle Ben had three children. Of all her cousins, she liked Wally the best. He took time to help her with her homework and to teach her what she called "**important things**." He had taught her a valuable lesson just last week. Don't loose your dimes gambling. At a church bazaar, Gracie lost her dime on the "Wheel of Fortune." She had guessed number nine, her favorite number but when the wheel stopped it was on twenty. Wally made her leave her dime on the green felt table. The money is for the poor he said to her. I'm poor Wally, and I need my dime to go with you to the movies. I have to go to the movie, they might not have movies in Oregon. It stars Shirley Temple. I just have to see Shirley Temple. It's my only dime.

That's called bad luck. You shouldn't have gambled with your last dime. You just won't be able to go to the movies with us. A bet is a bet. The priest will call you an Indian-giver for sure. What's an Indian-giver? Gracie stood there with her hands on her hips. That isn't true Wally, I'm not an Indian I'm German my grandpa told me so. I'm not an Indian. I'm a redhead she thought to herself, not a red skin. Some times my mother does call me a wild Indian. Gracie always liked the Indian stories especially about the Sioux. She learned about them in school. They did what they wanted and they rode horses and wore war paint. They even attacked her imaginary forts. Some times she wanted to go on the warpath. Indians were just misunderstood like she was.

Would her father give her another dime? If she asked real nice her father would give her an extra dime once in a while. She had learned from Wally that in Los Angeles you could go to a matinee movie for a dime on Saturday afternoons at the local theater.

The theater was within walking distance of her cousin's house. Gracie just loved going to the movies ever since the very first time. She noticed that parents seemed to like to send kids to the movies that lasted all afternoon. The movie theater was always full of children. On special occasions they even have extra money to buy popcorn. Gracie thought all movies were wonderful but especially movies about Shirley Temple. Her cousin Wally liked cowboy movies starring Tom Mix or Roy Rogers even the Lone Ranger and Tonto. Sometimes there was a double feature. The theater showed two movies for one dime. That was even better than a Christmas gift. All of her classmates at her old school had talked about what they had seen at the movies. At last,

now Gracie could talk about the movies too. Movies were pure magic. She still wished she could have been in the movies but they had to go to Oregon.

Thinking back to the church bazaar Gracie decided she didn't like losing her dimes. I won't ever gamble again she said to herself, one of her better childish decisions. Gracie had made such a fuss about her dime even the priest in the black robe, Father Vito, wanted to give it back to her. He said it was all right, the little girl didn't understand. Wally knew better, she did understand she just wanted to win and not take a chance on losing. She couldn't fool Wally. He knew she was full of mischief and a little cheat if you let her get away with cheating.

Thank goodness her father looked in his pocket and found another dime for Gracie. You know I can't say no you my little carrot top. I would give you my last dime. Cheating makes you a loser, another gift to understand for Gracie. How wonderful to have a loving father her father was always getting her with goodness.

Thank You, thank You she said. She would still be able to see a movie with her cousins on Saturday. Gracie slept with this dime under her pillow. She wouldn't ever take a chance of losing this dime. Dimes made the fantasy world of motion pictures come to life right before your eyes. Oh was there ever anything as wonderful as the magic of motion pictures?

Chapter 9

A Stick for Christmas

Gracie was still feeling insecure. It was Christmas time. Gracie and her sisters and her cousins were all excited about Santa Claus. It was almost Christmas Eve, the night when the Good family opened their presents. Every morning Gracie checked under the Christmas tree to see if Santa had delivered new presents while she was asleep. Santa always brought lots of presents to her cousin's house. There was a great big Christmas tree in the living room. Under the tree were lots of presents. The tree was covered with red lights and special old ornaments that had been in her cousin's family for years and years. There were many different kinds of glass hand painted Santa ornaments, angels, paper garlands, pine cones painted red, candy canes, teddy bears, sleds, and drums each one very special to her Aunt Berta. The tree was dressed in Christmas splendor.

Under the tree were a manger scene with the baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Aunt Berta even had sheep and cattle in the manger. Over the manger she had hung a star. Some of the Christmas decorations had come all the way from Germany. Her Aunt Berta was very pleased with the tree this year. She was sure this Christmas tree was the best one she had ever decorated. Every year she made it look more beautiful. Gracie had to be very careful not to break the big glass silver and red Christmas balls. Gracie loved the Christmas lights and the angel on top and especially the silver tinsel. Oh how Gracie loved Christmas. Her father told her it was the Birthday of Baby Jesus. Who was Baby Jesus? Hadn't the nuns said Jesus had died? Gracie didn't really know about Baby Jesus. If Gracie was honest with herself she admitted she only half listened to the nuns. Religious class was boring. So many rules. It was Santa Claus and presents that captured her attention. Some day, she thought to herself she would find out what was so important about Baby Jesus. The whole world celebrated his birthday. He must be a King. She wonder if he was a star in Hollywood. Gracie was beginning to learn about God's Gifts and Promises. She didn't realize she had already learned a lot of lessons about goodness and Love.

What would Santa bring her? Hours and hours were spent trying to decide what she wanted more than anything. All the parents told the children to make a list. Would she get candy in her stocking? Maybe even some Jelly Beans, she wondered? She always got an orange and some nuts. Would Santa bring her a bike, a baseball and bat, a new jump rope, more jacks, a top, maybe even a monopoly game? Her list was endless. Gracie's mother told her and her older sister that Santa knew if they were naughty or nice. Baby Lucy was always nice. Everyone loved baby Lucy. Gracie knew the warning was mainly for her. She had heard a man sing the "naughty or nice" song on the Radio. Did Santa really know if she was good like her name? Her mother

warned them Santa didn't give gifts to bad little girls. Her little sister Lucy didn't have to worry, she was still a baby and didn't ask too many questions or break things like Gracie. Everyone called Lucy a sweet golden haired angel. Gracie had to admit her little sister Lucy was always a good child just like her name implied. Sometimes I wish I could be a baby again, I could start all over and really learn how to be good. I think I am hopeless, she thought to herself. I can't seem to find the good place in me. Gracie hadn't learned to forgive herself.

It was finally almost Christmas Eve Night. Thank goodness I haven't knocked over the Christmas tree I'm not supposed to run in the house. Time to open presents and have oyster stew. Oh, No! She hated oyster stew. Why do we always have to have that hot white soup with slimy oysters floating in milk for Christmas? Why can't we have ham and mashed potatoes with gravy even peas and for dessert ice cream? I could even pretend to like peas at Christmas time.

What are oysters? Did all parents like oysters? Yuck, they looked like dead horny toads to Gracie. Gracie stop calling your Aunt Berta's soup horny toad stew this instant. Come help me set the table. She could hear her cousins giggling in the living room. Little Joey her cousin started to laugh and say horny toad stew real loud. Uncle Ben told him to stop, you will hurt your mothers feelings. Shame on you Gracie you started this he said. Her father just looked at her and smiled. Maybe he doesn't like oyster stew either thought Gracie. Gracie decided she would "be good" and "not complain." What good soup Aunt Berta she said. I'll just swallow the oysters whole she thought. Gracie found out that's not as easy as it sounds.

Now was not the time to upset Santa Claus. "He knows if I've been bad or good so be good for goodness sake," she would sing to herself to help her remember she was a Good. "Santa Claus is coming to town. Gracie was day dreaming she was thinking about the lesson she had learned about gambling. Never bet your last dime. Don't waste your money. Gambling can make you poor real fast. This is an important gift for Gracie to learn it was good she learned while she was so young. Gracie you look a million miles away. I was just remembering the church bazaar. As soon as your mom and your aunt Berta get the dishes washed we can open presents. You kids help clear the table. For once Gracie didn't mind being obedient.

At last everyone was finally home from last minute shopping. It was Christmas Eve. Will it ever be dark? Gracie couldn't believe she actually wanted it to be dark. Will everyone ever be finished with dinner dishes? Her mother told her Gracie "I want you to be patient. Stop complaining. You know we open the presents when it gets dark. You chatter all the time. We need some peace and quiet. You are the most impatient child. You want your own

way right now all the time.” Why do children have to learn patience? I tried once before and failed. Why do parents want children to be quiet? How could you be quiet when you had so many questions? What was in the beautiful packages? **I want to open up presents!** It was finally starting to get dark.

For the hundredth time that day she looked at the presents. To her amazement the biggest present under the tree had her name printed on a big tag with Santa’s picture. What a beautiful package. The present was covered with pretty red paper with candy canes and red ribbons. It was a real long package. What could it be? She couldn’t believe all her wishes were going to come true. Could it be a baseball and bat? She had a couple other packages too, but she knew they were probably clothes or shoes. Maybe they were books she liked books. Toys, new toys. How she loved Christmas. Even so, Gracie was worried. She still grew too fast. She had prayed she would become a sweet child like her little sister Lucy or her cousin Linda so she could get lots of presents.

Will God answer selfish prayers? Gracie thought if her mother heard her saying her prayers and asking God to make her a good little girl surely that would make her mother happy. It was very important to keep, not only Santa Claus happy, but her mother also. She had said her prayers real loud all week. Once her mother even said, Gracie God isn’t hard of hearing. If her mother was happy all things were possible. No that’s not right it was God who made all things possible. She remembered her mother had told her that very thing. She remembered back to when she was just a little girl who was afraid of spiders. God answered my prayer. Well maybe God can make my mother love me for Christmas. God can make impossible things come true, he has mysterious ways. Gracie got on her knees. Hurry up God I want to be good. it’s almost time to open presents and Santa Claus is coming tonight. Gracie had so much to learn about God.

Would time to open presents ever come? Gracie began to worry again. She was getting tall. Her dresses were always too short. Where would her parents get enough money to buy her enough dresses for school? Santa wouldn’t bring her dresses would he? Gracie had even been taller than Timmy but he didn’t seem to mind. Timmy always told Gracie she was smart and cute. Gracie missed Timmy. Was he having a good time at Christmas? Will Santa be mad because I have to have new shoes and new dresses all the time? No she had been a good little girl? She hadn’t been in trouble for a whole week, almost. Did Santa know in her heart she had always wanted to be good, not only cute and smart? Was Santa really God? I have to stop worrying, my head is beginning to get cranky. Finally Gracie heard her mother say “Gracie stop eating candy” it’s time to open the presents.

Her baby sister Lucy got to open the first present. It was a Wanda the Walking doll, a doll that could walk and even talk. It said, mama, mama in a beautiful sweet voice. Wanda had beautiful blond curls. Wanda was so big, she was even bigger than baby Lucy. Her doll dress was a special shiny light blue color. She had a beautiful blue bow in her hair just like Lucy. Gracie just knew this was going to be the best Christmas ever. Oh boy, if her sister got such a beautiful doll all things were possible, especially at Christmas. Besides her father had a real good job. Right after Christmas the Good family planned to move to Oregon, now they were going to be rich. I wonder if I will be able to go to movies in Oregon? I'll have plenty of dimes.

Then her cousin Linda opened a present. It was another beautiful doll with beautiful black curls and a silky red dress with silver dots. All the other girls in Gracie's family loved to play with dolls except Gracie. She loved to play baseball. Santa wouldn't give her a doll would he? That would be awful. Would her mother make her play with dolls if she had a new doll? Her mother said "Gracie it's your turn to open a present." She wondered to herself, should I open my big present first? It was like everyone heard her thoughts. Everyone said, "Gracie open your big present first." Yes, we want to see how you like your present said Uncle Ben." Why were the grownups all smiling? Maybe Christmas made grownups happy too. Everyone was acting like they had a secret. What could be in my big present? Was it that special?

Gracie ripped open the candy cane paper and there it was, a spanking stick, broken off a tree. It was a switch used to spank the children. What a wonderful joke on you Gracie, everyone said. Everyone laughed even Maxine her older sister, even her favorite aunt and uncle. They were all laughing at her. Baby Lucy just clapped her hands. Even her father thought she would think the stick was funny. The ones who laughed loudest were her cousins, especially Linda. Gracie looked at her mother she was laughing more than everyone. "Oh Gracie if you could see your face" she said. She was laughing so hard there were tears in her eyes. Gracie knew then they all had known about the stick.

They wanted to punish her for being full of mischief and being naughty. She was a big joke. What a big surprise! Gracie do you like your present asked Uncle Ben? She heard her mother say something about how Santa brought all bad children **new** spanking sticks for Christmas, making everyone laugh again. Gracie ran out of the room and slammed the door to a bedroom. She could still hear laughter from her family in the living room as she lay on the bed crying. What a great joke on Gracie everyone said. Her father said come back Gracie you have other presents. No more sticks I promise. Her uncle Bert said leave her alone she will get over it. Just you wait; tomorrow she will be figuring out a way to trick us. Everyone better

check his or her shoes tomorrow for rocks! Gracie learned another lesson cruelty is never funny.

That night she decided no matter what, she would get back at her cousins for laughing. Why did parents make even Santa mean, they even ruined Christmas. I guess God doesn't love bad little girls and neither does Santa. Santa isn't God that's for sure. God was supposed to be always good and love everybody. She probably shouldn't blame God. That would be a sin for sure. The nuns had told her about sins. Would God forgive bad little girls if they were sorry? He loved her still didn't he? The nuns said God loves all the little children. Would God be mad if she got back at her cousins and mother? As she fell asleep what made Gracie really mad was it hadn't even helped to eat the oyster stew without complaining. She finally opened her other presents the next day. As she suspected they were mostly clothes for school. She did get a couple books from her aunt and uncle. She loved books. She also got a kite and a new jump rope. The family also got a monopoly game. Gracie didn't know she had wonderful surprises waiting for her in Oregon.

Chapter 10 Moving To Oregon

Oregon was a Green Paradise compared to the dry desert southwest. Everything was beautiful outside but she wasn't happy inside. Why am I so unhappy she wondered? She found it harder and harder to make friends. She wasn't beautiful inside. Gracie thought about herself almost all the time now as My Lone. Gracie was still cute but she started to like being a naughty little girl. Being naughty is fun. I don't care what people think. She wanted attention and wanted to be told she was loved, but everyone was always so busy. No one had time for her stories. Her mother told her she was always underfoot. Her older sister Maxine didn't want her around. She was a pest.

Maxine had her music. She could play the piano and even win local talent contests. Maxine was beautiful. She was real tall and had beautiful black curly hair. Boys followed Maxine around like she was a movie star. She was always busy with her musical friends practicing for a recital. Maxine was five years older than Gracie and she had sophisticated friends and different interests. Maxine had a beautiful nose. Maxine was sure to make a socially prominent match.

Chapter 11

Gracie Breaks her Nose Playing Baseball

After school one day Gracie broke her nose while playing baseball. She was pitching when a ball came and hit her right in the nose. Now it didn't look quite right. She hadn't told her parents she broke her nose she just straightened it herself. She told them she had a nosebleed because there was a little blood on her shirt. They were too busy to question her. After her nose got better she noticed she had a funny bump on her nose. No one seemed to notice or care. To this day, Gracie has a funny bend in her nose. I'm not ever going to be beautiful like Maxine now. One day Maxine said to her. "Gracie you are like a wild Indian you don't fit in. Go play outside in the dirt. Just look at you, do you ever take a bath?" Her younger sister Lucy was always playing with her dolls. Gracie was in the way all the time. Everyone told her to go away, play outside. You are too rough with the dolls. You always break things. Go away. So she played alone. My Lone was truly alone.

Chapter 12

The Separation

For the first time Gracie lived in a regular house. Still she felt like the tumbleweeds in New Mexico. No roots! Just blowing with the wind. She learned having a nice house doesn't make you happy if you don't have any friends and if you aren't happy inside. Still it was a house with more rooms. A pre-fabricated house owned by the construction company, but it wasn't a trailer or an old motel. Gracie wondered why wasn't the new house a happy home like in the movies? Was it her fault? She could hear her father and mother fighting at night. She tried covering her ears but her mother was yelling again. Anger makes everyone's heart hurt. He was out too late. He drank too much. He gambled away their money. Gracie heard her mother say she couldn't trust her father anymore." She accused him of chasing after other women. Was it true? Didn't her father love her mom anymore? Was he going to leave? Where would Gracie live then? One day she heard the neighbor women gossiping, "You know that woman is drinking again. She is sleeping all the time because of all the alcohol she drinks." Pete at the grocery store told me she buys vodka almost every other day of the week. Those poor kids need more supervision. That red haired girl runs around like a wild Indian. Someone should report her mother to the authorities." What did it all mean? She had never told anyone her mother slapped her. Was there something really wrong with her mother?

Even her sister Maxine was worried. No one was happy. Why didn't Gracie's father come home? Gracie was afraid. Was it all her fault because she was a tiresome child, always underfoot? No one wanted her around. She was a pest. It was about this time that Gracie started calling herself "My Lone," **even to new people. Somehow she lost Gracie.** Was she even part of the Good family? Maybe she was a stray child they picked up from a home for children no one wanted. Would they take her back and say they didn't want her either? Even her favorite Aunt Berta always said she didn't look like the rest of her family. My Lone was sure her mother just wanted a maid to clean the house. Gracie do the dishes! Gracie did you finish your chores? You are supposed to make the beds. It was another one of My Lone's chores to mop the floor on her hands and knees and use a toothbrush in the corners to make sure all the dirt was gone. Her mother would check to see if she had cleaned the corners. If she didn't do a good job, her mother would make her do it again and again until she was satisfied. Then My Lone had to help make supper and wash or dry the dishes. Every day was full of chores. Why do houses always need cleaning?

At that time My Lone decided she didn't want to have children because they always needed clean clothes they always spilled things, they always wanted to eat. No one really wanted children they were too much trouble. No

children no pets. She felt more like a mother than a child. My Lone finally learned bitterness isn't the answer either. Being bitter makes you cruel.

Chapter 13 Gravel Candy

That summer her aunt and uncle and cousins came to visit them in Oregon. It was the perfect opportunity to pay back her cousins for laughing at her when she got a stick for Christmas. She never forgot she had a plan. My Lone had a bag of special candy that tasted like Jelly Beans but the candy looked just like plain common gravel. The driveway at her new house was made of real gravel. My Lone started to eat all her candy by herself right in front of her cousins. "Gracie share your candy with your cousins" but she pretended she didn't hear her mother. Her mother didn't like her to eat candy so she ate it all the time. You can't have any of my candy she said to her cousins. So her cousins told on her. Just as she knew they would her plan was working. Her mother made her share even though almost all of the candy was gone.

When the candy was gone, her cousin Joey wanted to know where she got the gravel candy so My Lone told him "I found it out in the driveway". Her cousins all ran outside and started chewing on the rocks in the driveway looking for the Jelly Bean gravel. My Lone hid around the corner of the house and laughed and laughed at them. Just then her cousin Joey broke his tooth and went crying into the house. Her mother screamed, "Gracie where are you?" Come here this instant! Did you tell your cousins you got candy from our gravel driveway? Do you realize Joey will have to go to a dentist? I will have to help pay the dental bill. I can't believe you are such a wicked child."

You're really in big trouble now. Go to your room and stay there. You don't get any supper tonight. My Lone didn't care. She had finally gotten her revenge. Even the spanking was worth it. Every time she pictured her cousins biting the dirty gravel she laughed and laughed. She didn't care if she had been wicked. Revenge felt good but soon her conscience started to bother her. I am no longer a Good. Probably God doesn't love me anymore. This revenge feeling is only good for short time then you feel guilty and ashamed.

My Lone learned her mother and father were separated. Even the visit from Uncle Ben and Aunt Berta hadn't helped stop her parents from always fighting. Her father wanted a divorce. Her mother said she refused because she didn't believe in divorce. Catholics don't get divorced. They stopped speaking. The house was full of tension.

My Lone turned into a lonely tomboy. She didn't have any friends. She decided she didn't want to be a girl. Girls had to grow up and do house work and take care of children. She didn't want to be like her mother, always mad and unhappy. She didn't care if she was cute anymore. My Lone spent her free time hunting for rocks and arrowheads in the Oregon forest all alone.

She loved all the green trees and the cool weather. It was so wonderful after living in the dry desert. She even loved the rain. She lived in her own world where she pretended she didn't care about her father not loving her anymore.