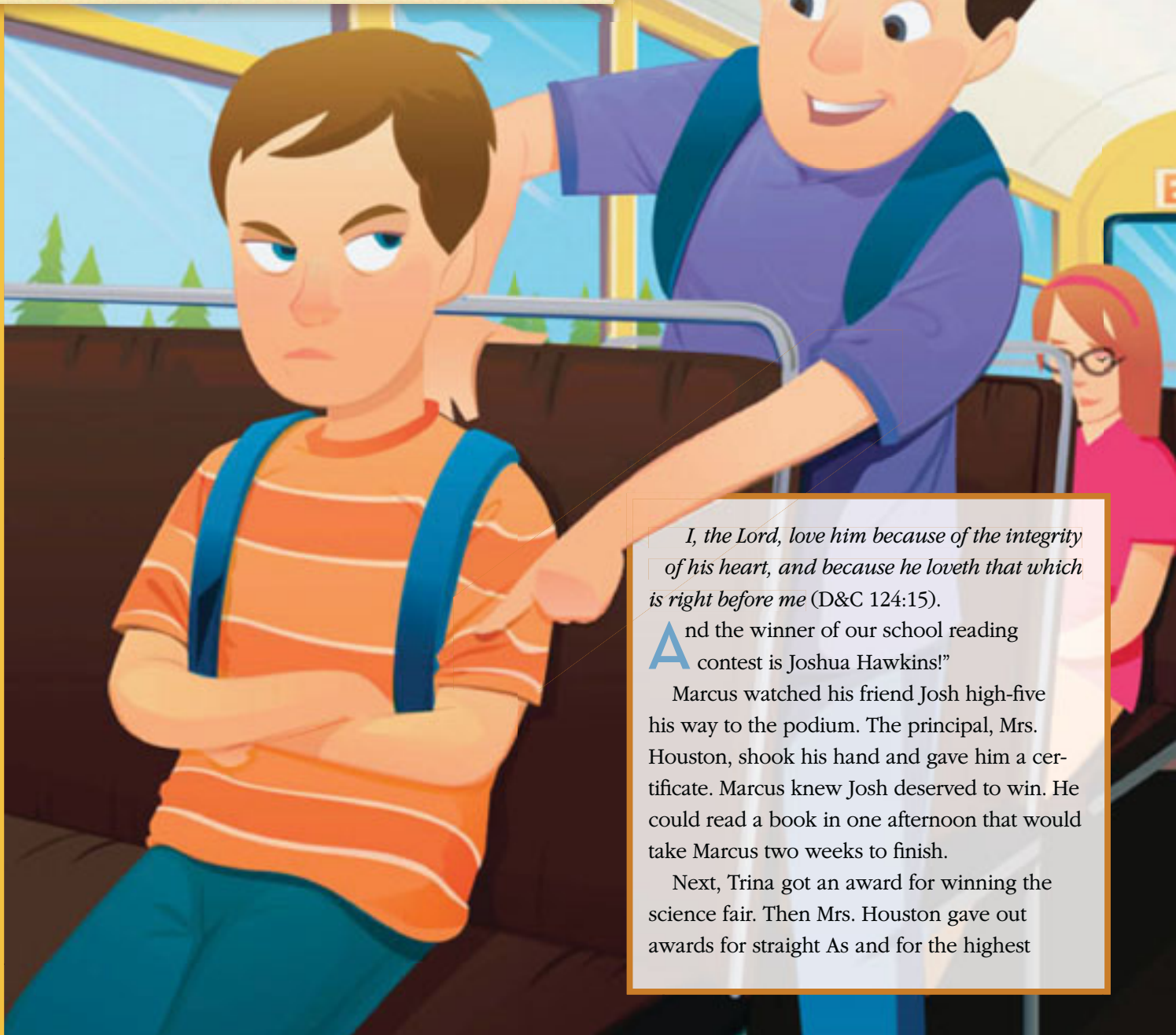


The Best



By Ann Wood

(Based on a true story)



I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me (D&C 124:15).

And the winner of our school reading contest is Joshua Hawkins!”

Marcus watched his friend Josh high-five his way to the podium. The principal, Mrs. Houston, shook his hand and gave him a certificate. Marcus knew Josh deserved to win. He could read a book in one afternoon that would take Marcus two weeks to finish.

Next, Trina got an award for winning the science fair. Then Mrs. Houston gave out awards for straight As and for the highest

scores on the state achievement tests. Marcus kept listening, but Mrs. Houston didn't call his name.

Marcus hoped the assembly would be over soon. He was tired of sitting, and his hands were getting sore from clapping. Most of all, he was disappointed. He wished he could be the best at something.

Finally, Mrs. Houston adjusted her glasses and smiled. "Our last awards are for perfect attendance," she said. Marcus slumped in his seat. Last month he had chicken pox, so he wouldn't be getting an attendance award either.

On the way home, Ari leaned over the bus seat and poked Marcus on the arm. "Hey, Josh got three awards, but Trina only got two," he said. "How many did you get?"



Marcus's face felt hot. "None," he said.

Marcus got off the bus and kicked a rock up the driveway to his house. Mom was in the garden pulling weeds. "How was your day?" she asked.

Marcus frowned. "We had an awards assembly, but I didn't get any awards," he said. "I'm not the best at anything."

Mom put down her weed digger. "Well, maybe it seems that way," she said. "But who does your teacher ask when she needs someone trustworthy to take a message to the office?"

"Sometimes she asks me," Marcus admitted.

"And who always reminds us when it's time for family home evening?"



"Do your best with the talents your Father in Heaven has given you. . . . All of us are endowed with abundant talent, beauty, and ability."²

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"I do," Marcus said.

"Who found a ten-dollar bill at the store and turned it in, even though he was saving money to buy a soccer ball that he really, really wanted?"

"I did," said Marcus.

Mom ruffled Marcus's hair a little. "And who can make your little brother laugh when no one else can?"



Marcus couldn't help smiling when he thought about his brother's goofy laugh.

"Me," he said.

"Well," said Mom, "you may not *think* you're the best at anything, but you're *doing* your best to be the kind of boy Heavenly Father wants you to be. And I wouldn't be any prouder if you had come home with a whole armful of awards."

Marcus gave Mom a hug. He noticed how hot and tired she looked. "Do you need some help with the weeding, Mom?"

"Thanks, Marcus. You're the best." ♦

Matt, you're the best brother I've ever had.

I'm the only brother you've ever had!

Well, it's still true.