



BY CLARE MISHICA

(Based on a true story)

Let your speech be always with grace

(Colossians 4:6).

Nettie,” I hollered, picking up a pair of socks that were draped over my fishbowl like a lampshade.

“Oops,” giggled Nettie as she charged into our bedroom. She knocked over the stack of books on my nightstand as she tried to stop.

“That’ll be ten cents,” I ordered as I dropped the socks in her hand. Every time Nettie left her stuff on my side of our bedroom, I made her put ten cents in the big jar on my shelf. Mom told me I could do that if I thought it would help. Nettie was really sloppy, and I was the lucky one who had to share a room with her.

Nettie dropped a dime in the jar and jammed her socks into her jumbled-up drawer. She turned to run out, and I pointed to the books she’d scattered all over the floor.

“Good thing I don’t have to pay ten cents apiece for these,” she joked. “I’d owe you my allowance for two years.”

“Funny,” I said. “You wouldn’t have to pay anything if you kept your messes on your own side of the room.”

“I know,” Nettie sighed, trying to stack up my books. She knocked them over again with her elbow before she’d finished.

“Slow down a little,” I grumbled, grabbing my *Birds of North America* book before she ripped the pictures.

“Taylor is waiting for me to play baseball,” Nettie said. “I’m going to show her how to hit a home run.”

“Oh, just go,” I finally told her.

“Thanks,” she said. She dropped the books on my bed and raced off. Of course, the books bounced back onto the floor. Somehow everything Nettie touched seemed to end up on the floor.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ROBISON

That week, Nettie's luck didn't improve. She tossed her soccer uniform and shin pads on my bed, and that added up to sixty cents including the socks. Then she flooded Mom's pot of violets when she watered them, and the water made puddles on the shelf and streaks down the wall. Next, she broke a plate when she tried to help dry the dishes, knocked her bike over and bent the pedal, and lost one orange tennis shoe.

"If you slowed down you wouldn't be such a disaster," I told Nettie. "And you would be able to find your stuff if you were neater."

Nettie didn't say anything. She knew I was right.

For one moment, Nettie's luck changed—Taylor's family invited her to go camping with them that Friday. But her luck didn't last long. Friday morning, Nettie came down with the flu.



I went in our room to talk to her. She gave me the same look she'd made the day her pet worm Wiggles died.

"I'm sorry you can't go camping," I told her. I was sorry for me too. I had been looking forward to a break from sharing a room.

"That's OK," she said. "It's probably good that I can't go. I would have wrecked everything!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She sniffled, and not from the flu. "What if I knocked down the tent or broke the lantern or fell in the lake? I do everything wrong. I'm a big disaster. You said so yourself."

I didn't know what to do or say as the tears slipped down Nettie's cheeks. I felt horrible. My heart thumped in my chest. What had I done? I'd never thought about how everything I said made Nettie feel bad about herself. I always told her how she messed up, but I never told her what she did right.

"Nettie, you are a good friend," I said. "I'm sure Taylor wishes you were there right now. You try to help her. In fact, you try to help everyone."

"Really?" Nettie asked, wiping her nose.

I nodded. "Yep. You're always helping Mom with the chores. She appreciates that."

"She does?"

"Of course," I told her. "You're the nicest helper I know, and I'm sorry I didn't tell you before."

"Thanks," Nettie said. She was smiling and looking a little better.

When Nettie dozed off to sleep, I quietly took the big jar off my shelf and took it to Mom. I had an idea.

Later that day, Dad took me to the store. I returned with a brightly wrapped box just for Nettie.

“A present?” she asked. “Because I’m sick?”

I shook my head. “No. Because I love you.” I showed her the empty jar. “I never should have made you pay me. The present rightly belongs to you.”

Nettie squealed and hugged me so hard I almost dropped the jar. “You’re the greatest sister,” she said.

“You’re pretty great yourself,” I said.

I looked at the empty jar in my hands and thought about it. Then I opened my closet and put the jar on the top shelf. I didn’t want it anymore. Instead of filling the jar with dimes, I planned on filling Nettie up with good feelings about herself. I knew I could do it because Nettie had shown me how much power my words had. From now on, I would be much more careful about how I used them. I wasn’t the greatest sister yet, but maybe I could be a good one if I tried. ●



“None of us need one more person . . . pointing out where we have failed or fallen short. . . . What each of us does need is family . . . who believe in us, and who believe we’re trying to do the best we can.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1915–94)²

