

I

COULDN'T

BY JENNY TONKS

I love reading and was looking for the next fun book. Little did I know where I would find my all-time favorite.

What am I going to read now?" my best friend Liz whined into the phone. "I just can't *believe* it's over!"

"I know," I said. "It doesn't seem real." We had been talking on the telephone for close to an hour, discussing our favorite series of books. After reading these best-selling books together for several years, we had just finished with the final book.

"Oh well," Liz sighed, "I guess I'll just start over again."

"Not me," I said. "I'm ready for something new."

"But what will you read?" Liz asked.

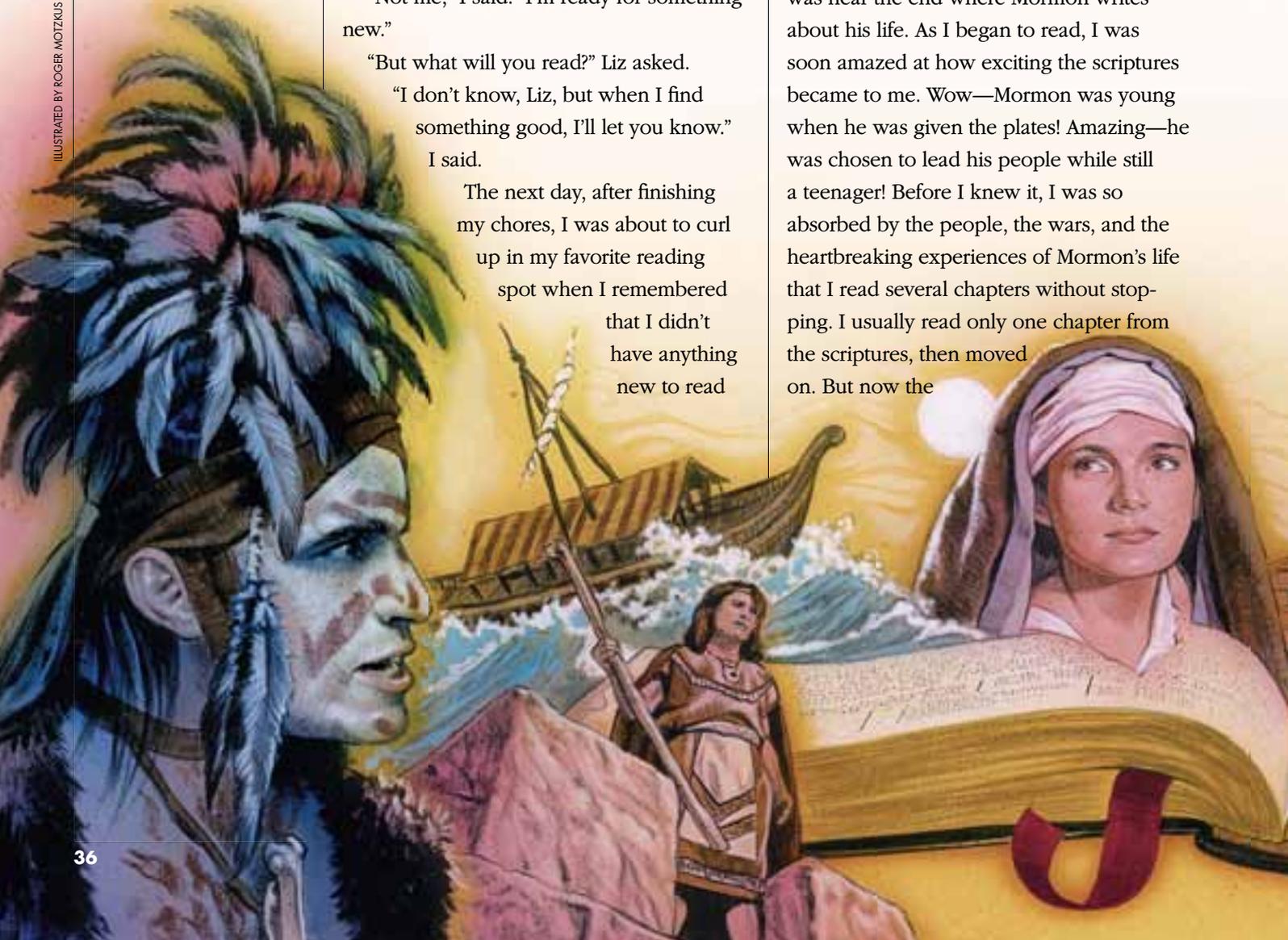
"I don't know, Liz, but when I find something good, I'll let you know."

I said.

The next day, after finishing my chores, I was about to curl up in my favorite reading spot when I remembered that I didn't have anything new to read

yet. The only thing left in my reading corner was the Book of Mormon. A couple of years earlier I had started putting my scriptures on top of whatever "fun" book I was reading at the time. I had felt guilty for spending so much time reading my fiction books when I hadn't so much as touched my scriptures. So I had made a rule that I was not allowed to read my fun book until I read my scriptures first.

I plopped down onto my reading corner and picked up the Book of Mormon. I was near the end where Mormon writes about his life. As I began to read, I was soon amazed at how exciting the scriptures became to me. Wow—Mormon was young when he was given the plates! Amazing—he was chosen to lead his people while still a teenager! Before I knew it, I was so absorbed by the people, the wars, and the heartbreaking experiences of Mormon's life that I read several chapters without stopping. I usually read only one chapter from the scriptures, then moved on. But now the



PUT IT DOWN

scriptures were becoming more interesting than my other books had been.

Why, I wondered, weren't the scriptures this interesting to me before? Maybe I needed to spend a lot of time reading this book to become emotionally involved in the lives of the characters. Maybe I needed to spend more time in the scriptures to understand the different writing styles of the prophets who wrote the Book of Mormon. Maybe I needed to remember that the stories in the Book of Mormon are true.

Whatever the reason, I am glad I kept reading. I finished the Book of Mormon the next week, then started over again with "I, Nephi." I became so emotionally involved in the lives of the prophets, the Nephites, and the Lamanites, that the scriptures now come alive for me each time I read them. I'm angry when the people turn wicked;

I'm happy

when they repent and witness miracles; I cry when their hearts are broken by tragedies, sins, and the choices of others. I often read more than one chapter at a time now, especially when there is a long voyage, a grueling war, or a visit from heavenly messengers in that particular section of the book.

Since that day in my reading corner, I have found other fiction books that I enjoy reading after my chores are finished. But I no longer need a scripture reading rule to make myself enjoy a closeness to God and the guidance of the Spirit like I never have before.

I gave a copy of the Book of Mormon to Liz, who is not a member of the Church and is still searching for books to read. No, she hasn't yet realized how to make the scriptures come alive in her life, but neither had I until I spent more time in them. My goal is to help her learn—like I did—that the scriptures can be fun and entertaining to read and that, best of all, they will bring her the happiness, the answers, and the closeness to God that I have experienced. **NE**

