



Take the Christmas challenge of reading the story and finishing "Callie's Christmas Adventure" on the lines provided at the end of the story.

If you would like to share your story, send it to the author at this email address:
NewClassicsStudyGuides@gmail.com



Callie's Zany Zoo Christmas

Callie slipped her binoculars over her blonde curls. *It's cool having the beach in my own backyard.*

She could wake up and build a sandcastle, or go swimming any time she wanted, if the water was warm enough. She could hunt for shells and find a starfish to add to her collection. On some days, she might even save her brother from a sea monster. At least that's what *he* thought.

A tingle ran down Callie's spine as she dashed toward the beach. *What dolphin species will I see today?* She would take a photo and pin it on her *I love dolphins* poster. She was amazed that there were eleven kinds of dolphins. Maybe she would sight a Bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops truncates* or *Turvey topseys*.

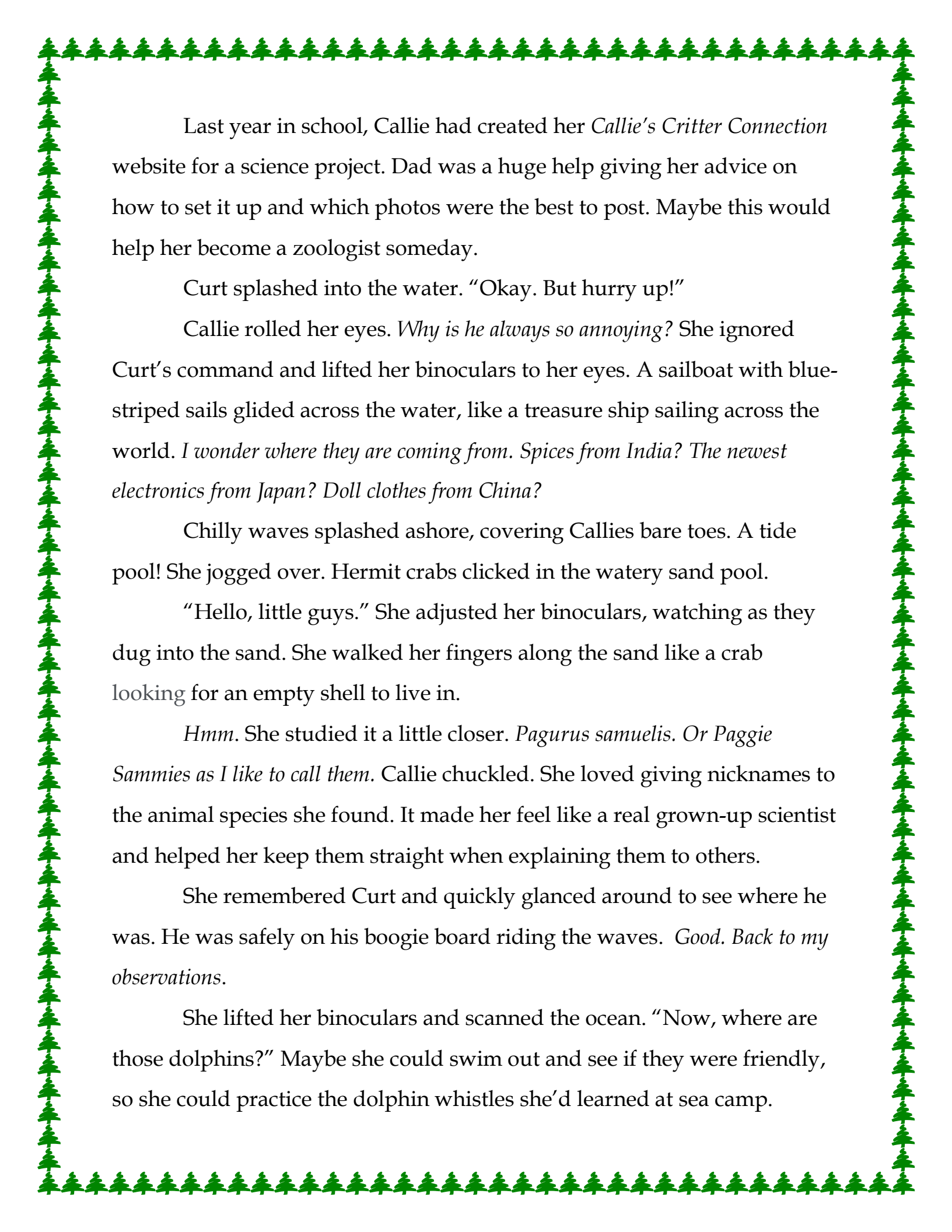
"Come on squirt," she called over her shoulder to her little brother. She cleared her throat, "I mean *Curt*."

Sister and brother shuffled through the warm sand. Callie tugged the strap of her swimsuit. It was a perfectly sunny late November day in southern California. Curt slowed down to pick up his lost flip-flop.

"Hurry up!" Callie inhaled the salty sea air. She could hardly wait to get to her favorite place! "Okay, you know the routine. I'll walk you up to the waves but then you're on your own."

Curt frowned.

"Don't worry. I got my eye on you, squirt. I want to see if there are any animals I can post on my *Callie's Critter Connection* before I come swimming."



Last year in school, Callie had created her *Callie's Critter Connection* website for a science project. Dad was a huge help giving her advice on how to set it up and which photos were the best to post. Maybe this would help her become a zoologist someday.

Curt splashed into the water. "Okay. But hurry up!"

Callie rolled her eyes. *Why is he always so annoying?* She ignored Curt's command and lifted her binoculars to her eyes. A sailboat with blue-striped sails glided across the water, like a treasure ship sailing across the world. *I wonder where they are coming from. Spices from India? The newest electronics from Japan? Doll clothes from China?*


Chilly waves splashed ashore, covering Callie's bare toes. A tide pool! She jogged over. Hermit crabs clicked in the watery sand pool.

"Hello, little guys." She adjusted her binoculars, watching as they dug into the sand. She walked her fingers along the sand like a crab looking for an empty shell to live in.

Hmm. She studied it a little closer. *Pagurus samuelis.* Or *Paggie Sammies* as I like to call them. Callie chuckled. She loved giving nicknames to the animal species she found. It made her feel like a real grown-up scientist and helped her keep them straight when explaining them to others.

She remembered Curt and quickly glanced around to see where he was. He was safely on his boogie board riding the waves. *Good. Back to my observations.*

She lifted her binoculars and scanned the ocean. "Now, where are those dolphins?" Maybe she could swim out and see if they were friendly, so she could practice the dolphin whistles she'd learned at sea camp.



Just then, she spotted something else. “Seals!” She jogged down the beach a little way to get a better look. “Ah yes, the *Zalophus Californianus*, also known as the California Sea Lion – AKA Zallie Callies.”

Callie giggled as she watched two baby seals and their mother playing in the water. Their gazes caught her and their big brown eyes seemed to smile at her. She clicked several pictures. Her heart warmed as she remembered helping to rescue the baby sea lion Sadie last year, when her flipper got caught in a fisherman’s net.

At last, Callie spotted it! A dorsal fin gliding across the shining water. “Awesome, a dolphin!” She adjusted her binoculars to get a better look. “Uh-oh!” She caught her breath. That’s no dolphin. It’s a shark!”

Where’s Curt?

“Curt!” she hollered, waving her arms. “Get out of the water! Code red! Code red!”

Curt turned and looked at Callie, wide-eyed. He catapulted toward shore like he was being shot out of a cannon.

She rushed to the shore as Curt bolted from the water, panting. She tugged him by the hand. “Come on! Let’s report this to the lifeguard.”

Callie rushed up to the lifeguard stand. “Ty! shark. Fifty feet down the beach. From the looks of it, I’d say it’s a mako.”

Tyler sprang up and clutched his megaphone. “Thanks, Callie. Good work. Red flag! Everyone out of the water! Red flag!”

As soon as Callie and Curt reached home, she scurried to her room. She had pinned every shark sighting this year on her *Sharks of the World* poster. She took a blue pushpin off her desk and pinned it near her beach.



Then she dashed to the den and booted up the computer. She typed in www.OAA.com

Callie clicked: Report Shark Sighting.

She liked being a part of the Ocean Animal Awareness group in her neighborhood. She saluted the OAA flag. "Callie Fleming, oceanographer on duty!" It made her feel important, keeping her beach safe.

Curt's voice trailed down the hall, relaying his shark encounter to mom. "It was a shark 100 feet long!" he blurted, and he was right on my tail. I stared into his cold black eyes and said 'You're not going to have me for dinner!' So I kicked him with my big flippers and escaped!"

Callie shook her head. *Little boys' imaginations!*

Minutes later, Curt padded into the den. "Look what came in the mail."


Callie's fingers clicked on the keyboard. "Let me type this last thing. There." She pushed "submit" and whirled around in her chair. "What you got?"

Curt's eyes twinkled. "The Christmas catalog!"

Being the end of November, Curt and Callie officially kicked off the Christmas season to search for the best toys.

"I'll get the markers." Callie grabbed them off the desk. "Let's go into the living room."

Curt dove on the couch and bounced "I can't wait to get all the new building block sets." He jumped higher. And a new bike! And one of those new laser guns ..."



Callie nestled on the loveseat across from him and sent him her big-sister glare, that said, “*Stop jumping on the couch or I’ll tell Mom.*”

Curt stopped jumping and plopped on his bottom. Callie scooted next to him. “I’m so excited for Christmas. I hope I get an iPad.” She didn’t always get along with Curt, but when it came to Christmas banded together.

Dad had been at the army base all day and walked in the front door wearing his khaki military uniform. “How are my little troopers doing?”

Curt ran to him and leaped into his arms. “We saw a gigantic shark. Dad, it almost ate me!”

Dad looked alarmed. “What’s this?”

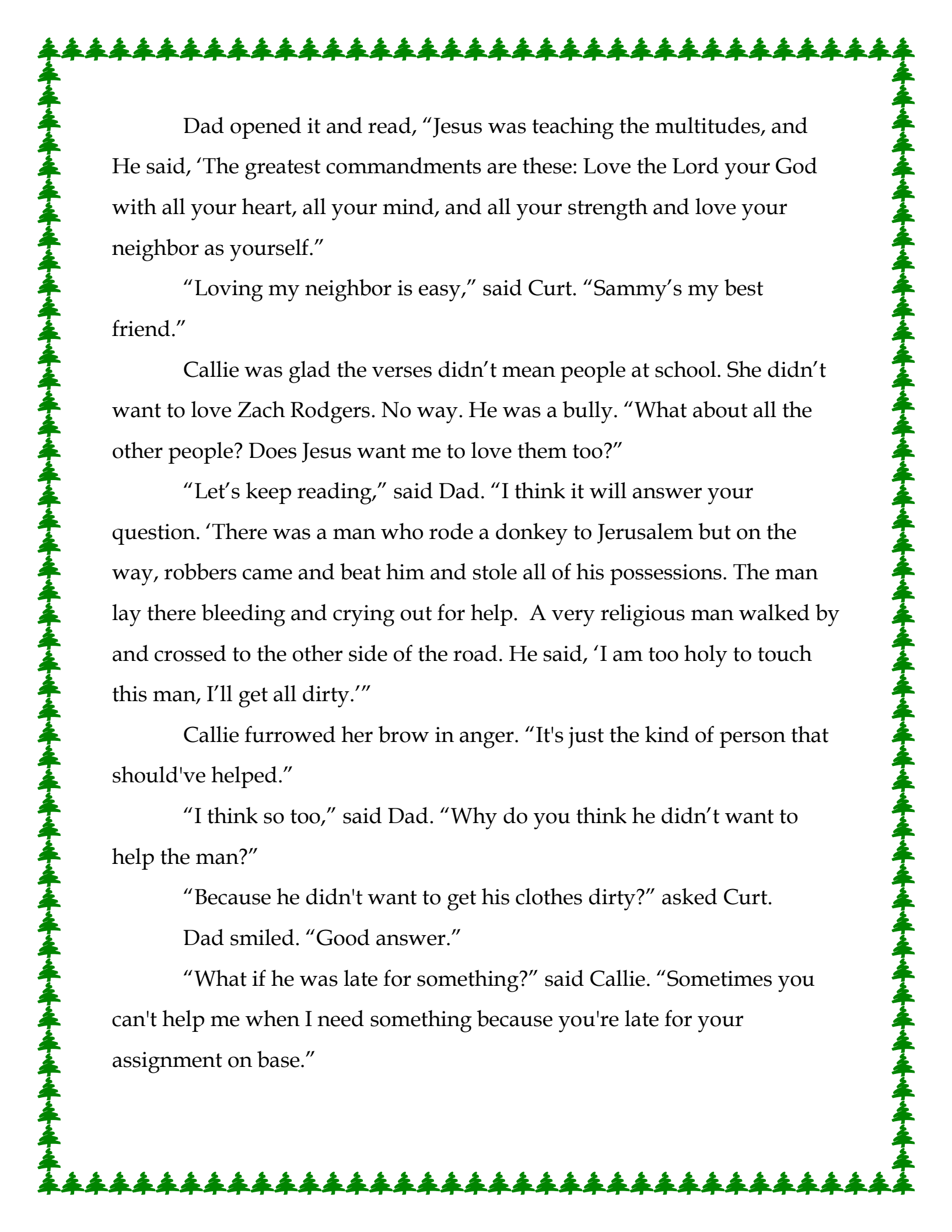
“He’s exaggerating, Dad. The shark was fifty feet away. I called Curt out right away and reported it. I think from the photos I took that it was a mako! *Isurus oxyrinchus* or *Issus Oxicalis*. The fastest shark in the world. Probably looking for a swordfish lunch.”

Dad patted her shoulder proudly. “That’s my girl!”

Curt looked up at Dad with his big blue eyes. “Daddy, tell us a story.”

Callie rushed over and threw her arms around Dad. “Yes, please tell us a story.” She sat on the couch, pulling her knees up to her chest. Dad sat next to her, took off his hat, and set down his briefcase. Curt snuggled beside them.

“It’s a little early, but okay.” As Dad reached for his Bible, a flutter of excitement beat in Callie’s chest. There was always a good story in there.



Dad opened it and read, "Jesus was teaching the multitudes, and He said, 'The greatest commandments are these: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"Loving my neighbor is easy," said Curt. "Sammy's my best friend."

Callie was glad the verses didn't mean people at school. She didn't want to love Zach Rodgers. No way. He was a bully. "What about all the other people? Does Jesus want me to love them too?"

"Let's keep reading," said Dad. "I think it will answer your question. 'There was a man who rode a donkey to Jerusalem but on the way, robbers came and beat him and stole all of his possessions. The man lay there bleeding and crying out for help. A very religious man walked by and crossed to the other side of the road. He said, 'I am too holy to touch this man, I'll get all dirty.'"


Callie furrowed her brow in anger. "It's just the kind of person that should've helped."

"I think so too," said Dad. "Why do you think he didn't want to help the man?"

"Because he didn't want to get his clothes dirty?" asked Curt.

Dad smiled. "Good answer."

"What if he was late for something?" said Callie. "Sometimes you can't help me when I need something because you're late for your assignment on base."



Dad looked thoughtful. "Hmm. He didn't want to help the bruised man because he was proud." He continued reading, "Then came a despised Samaritan. Samaritans weren't supposed to talk to Jews. But when He heard the man crying his heart felt sad and he had compassion."

"What's com-*passion*?" asked Curt.

"It's love in action," said Dad. "Not just hoping the man gets help but doing something about it. So, do you know what the Samaritan did?"

Curt looked wide-eyed and shook his head.

"He bandaged up the man's wounds and laid him on his own donkey and took care of him. Which man fulfilled the great commandment to love their neighbor as themselves?"

"Even though they didn't live in the same neighborhood," said Callie thoughtfully, "it was the man who took the time to be kind to him."

"Even if he was late," said Curt, "he didn't care. The bruised man was more important."

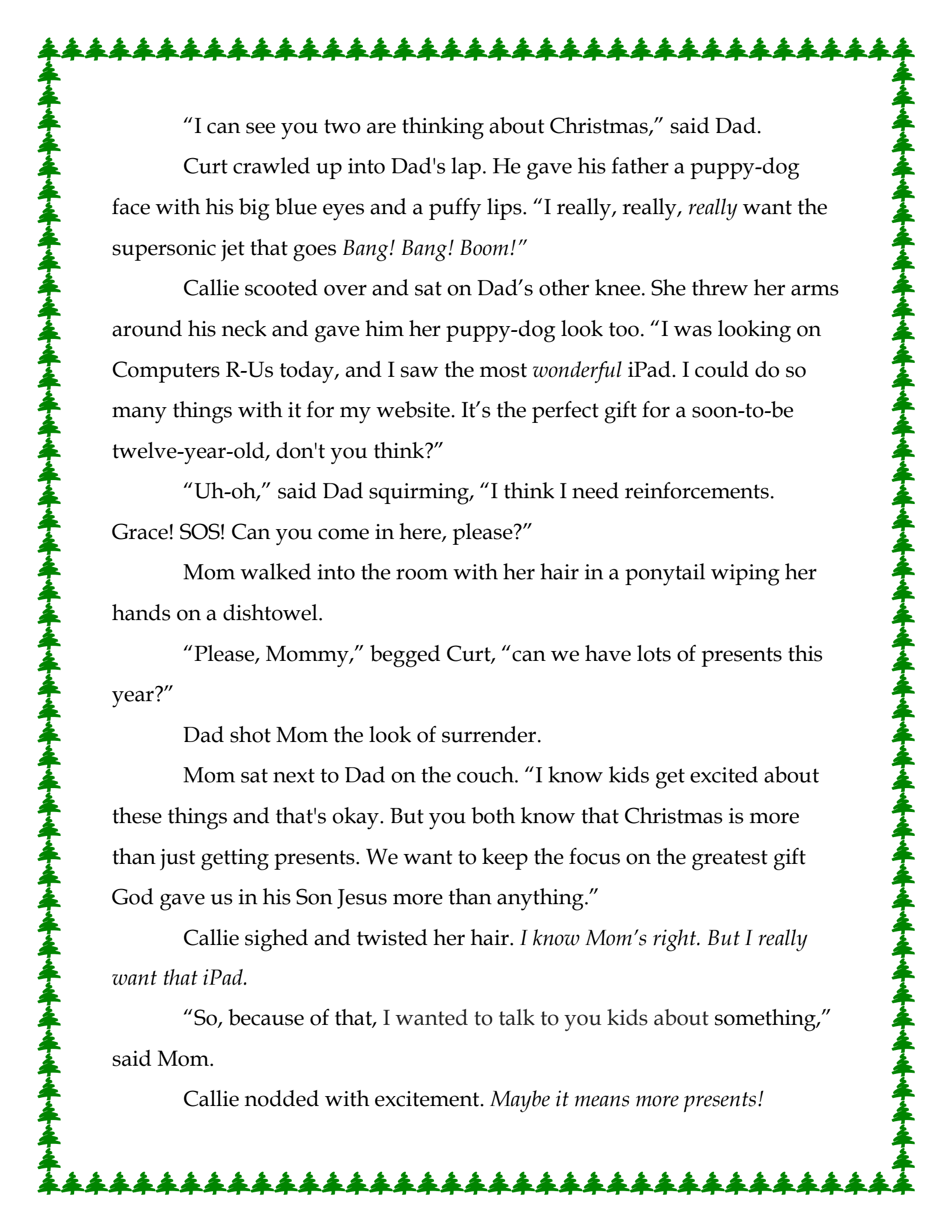
Dad's eyes shone. "That's right. We should always be ready like the good Samaritan to help those in need wherever we see them. Even if it's not convenient."

"I like that story," said Callie. She tucked the thoughts into her heart. She would keep a look-out for someone in need.

"What happened to the donkey?" asked Curt. "They sure did a lot of good things back in those days didn't they, Daddy?"

"Uh-huh. They also carried a special mother who was going to have a baby."

Callie's eyes sparkled. "Jesus!"



“I can see you two are thinking about Christmas,” said Dad.

Curt crawled up into Dad's lap. He gave his father a puppy-dog face with his big blue eyes and a puffy lips. “I really, really, *really* want the supersonic jet that goes *Bang! Bang! Boom!*”

Callie scooted over and sat on Dad’s other knee. She threw her arms around his neck and gave him her puppy-dog look too. “I was looking on Computers R-Us today, and I saw the most *wonderful* iPad. I could do so many things with it for my website. It’s the perfect gift for a soon-to-be twelve-year-old, don't you think?”

“Uh-oh,” said Dad squirming, “I think I need reinforcements. Grace! SOS! Can you come in here, please?”

Mom walked into the room with her hair in a ponytail wiping her hands on a dishtowel.

“Please, Mommy,” begged Curt, “can we have lots of presents this year?”


Dad shot Mom the look of surrender.

Mom sat next to Dad on the couch. “I know kids get excited about these things and that's okay. But you both know that Christmas is more than just getting presents. We want to keep the focus on the greatest gift God gave us in his Son Jesus more than anything.”

Callie sighed and twisted her hair. *I know Mom's right. But I really want that iPad.*

“So, because of that, I wanted to talk to you kids about something,” said Mom.

Callie nodded with excitement. *Maybe it means more presents!*



“This year, instead of doing our regular Advent calendar, we are going to do a service project Advent calendar called ‘God’s Angels on Assignment.’”

“Awww, no chocolate?” whined Curt.

“What kind of project?” asked Callie. She liked projects.

Mom brought out a poster with a Christmas tree on it. “First, we color the tree together. Then we pull a slip of paper out of this jar to get our Advent Angel Assignments. Angels are God’s helpers, so we will be too.”

“Can I draw first?” asked Callie.

Mom nodded and held out the jar for her.

Callie stuck her hand in the jar and pulled out a slip of paper. “Oh cool! They’re shaped like Christmas ornaments. This one says, ‘Be the Light of the World by brightening someone’s day. Help someone who needs help decorating with lights.’”

“Yay!” shouted Curt. “I like lights.”

Callie thought for a minute. “But who?”

“What about Mrs. Whitley across the street?” said Mom. “She just broke her hip. She usually puts her lights up right after Thanksgiving, but I noticed she doesn’t have any lights on her house yet.”

“That’s a whole week late,” said Callie. “Curt and I will go over first thing in the morning.”

Dad smiled and nodded his approval.

Mom set a craft box with colored pencils and glitter on the family room table. “Dinner is still forty minutes away. If you want, you two can get started. Let’s tape the tree poster here on the door after you color it.”

Curt and Callie flew to the table. Dad scooted a chair next to Callie.
“I want to help too.”

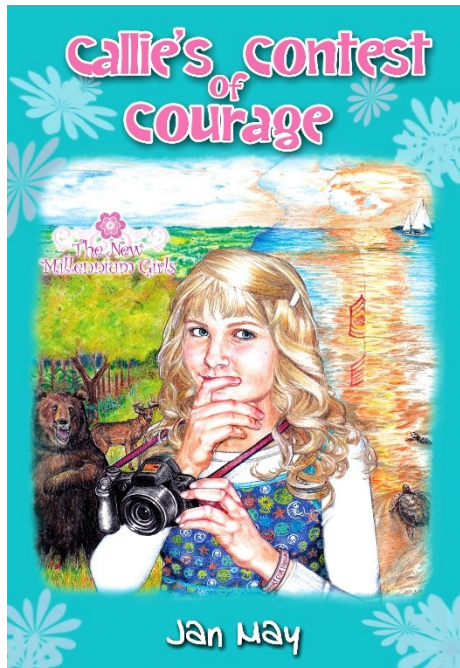
All three of them worked hard coloring the tree poster and Callie colored the little ornament that said, “Be the Light of the World.”

With each stroke of glitter glue, excitement bubbled in Callie’s heart. This just might be a different kind of Christmas. Even though she really, really wanted that iPad, she sensed there was something more important going on, something bigger than herself, something she could almost . . . *feel*.

It felt very much like . . . a Christmas adventure was about to begin!

What happens? Take the Christmas Challenge and finish this story on the paper provided or on Google Docs. Send your story to the author at this email address:

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Look for Callie’s first book –

“Callie’s Contest of Courage”

Eleven-year-old Callie Fleming is a passionate animal lover! She collects shark teeth and rescues a baby seal. Her bedroom looks more like a science museum! Her dad, the coolest dad in the world, is an award-winning photographer and Marine Corps Sergeant. She wants to enter an important animal photo contest but must lean on Dad’s help to win. But when her father is untimely deployed overseas and becomes strangely silent to her emails, she finds her whole world crashing

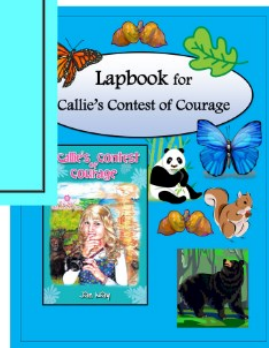
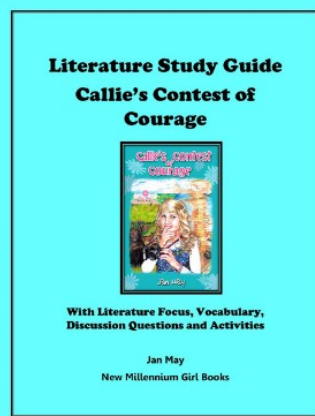
down. What will a wild bear encounter and butterfly DNA mush teach her about trusting God? Join Callie, her annoying little brother, Curt, and the

Twins of Mischief on this exciting journey of faith, family, and the power of prayer.

"I believe girls as young as 6 will eagerly read the book with someone. My daughter loved this book! It nurtured her faith in Christ." Tracey Masters, homeschool parent

Callie's book also comes in a Lit Bundle!

Callie Literature Bundle



Includes 3 Books that will whisk girls away on a literary adventure of faith!

- Callie's Contest of Courage -Mid Grade-novel
- Contest Lapbook
- Callie Literature Study Guide

"I'm always on the lookout for positive, adventurous books for my kids - especially ones with characters who

possess a strong and growing faith. Unfortunately, those are not very easy to find. But recently I hit the jackpot when Jan May sent me a copy of her newly released book, Callie's Contest of Courage, and I was most impressed." ~Amy Bradsher, Homeschool Parent and Blogger at Nest in the Rock

