

From the Mouth of a Babe

By Carol Ottley-Mitchell

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"God bless Mommy and Daddy. God bless Ruth and help her to behave better tomorrow and oh, thank you for all of the blessings we have. Amen"

Joseph's mom smiled and kissed him on the forehead. His eyes were already closed. The moonlight seeped through a crack in the curtains and lit his face with a halo-like glow.

"Sleep well, my love," she said softly.

The next day was Christmas Eve. Joseph woke up early and excited. His mother had promised to take him to Basseterre for his Christmas present and a treat. It was not an exciting present, a new pair of shoes for school, but Joseph did not mind, a trip to town was an adventure in itself, especially since Ruth would be staying home with Grandma.

They waited on the side of the road for 15 minutes before they were able to catch a bus that was not full. Eventually they were able to cram into a hot, crowded bus and head into town. Joseph sat on his mother's lap as there was no seat for him.

When they arrived in town, the side walks were crowded. Joseph's mom held his hand tightly as they maneuvered through the crowds towards the bank. Joseph's mom went to the ATM and withdrew \$100.

"That's \$68 for the shoes, \$25 for the pizza and we will take a taxi home with the rest."

"A taxi?" Joseph's eyes opened as wide as the pizza he would have for lunch.

"Yes, a special treat for your Christmas. You been such a good boy."

Joseph was really excited now. He had never ridden in a taxi before. Both of his parents worked in a factory and their hours had been cut that year. They were just barely making enough money to keep the family fed and clothed so they seldom had extra for new things, gifts and certainly not for taxis!

When they got to the bottom of the bank steps a man came up to them. His clothes were dirty, his hair was matted and he smelt strongly of a mix of odors that Joseph could not identify.

"Gimme a dollar, nah," he said.

Joseph's mom steered her son around the disheveled man and continued walking.

"Mommy, why didn't you give him money? He needs it." Joseph asked. He remembered his Sunday school lessons about helping others.

His mother looked surprised at the idea. "I'm not giving him MY money. He would just spend it on alcohol. Didn't you smell him?"

Joseph and his mother went to the shoe store and bought the shoes. He wanted to wear them out of the

store but his mother did not allow it.

"No, honey, I want them to look new for school. Maybe for a little while on Christmas day."

"Mommy, look, there's auntie Bertha!"

"Where is she?" Joseph's mom replied looking around quickly. "I don't want to see her today."

"Why Mommy?" Joseph asked as his mother shepherded him quickly in the other direction.

"Since Uncle Arthur lost his job, every time I see her she wants to borrow money. Like she thinks money growing on trees in our back yard."

They headed to the pizza store. Joseph's mother let him order and pay for the pizza. He felt grown up.

The restaurant was full. Many of the people who had come to town to shop were also having lunch there. Joseph was starting on his third slice of pizza when a little boy came in. He looked very tough, bare foot and dirty. The face of the owner of the pizza store tightened when the boy entered.

"I don't have anything for you today, I'm busy," the owner said.

The boy turned slowly and looked at each of the patrons in the store. They all looked away or just ignored him, continuing with their eating and talking. Only Joseph met his eyes.

"Mommy," he said, "can we buy him some pizza?"

"He shouldn't be in here begging where decent people eating," his mother replied, "besides, I only have enough for us."

"Well, he can have my last slice then," and without waiting for an answer he got up and held the slice out to the boy.

The boy looked at him suspiciously at first, then he took the pizza slice.

"Come sit with us," Joseph told the boy. Joseph's mother looked horrified, but she did not say anything as Joseph walked back to the table with the boy. The boy sat and ate the pizza hungrily.

"Mommy, can we buy him a drink too?"

"But Joseph, you know I only have enough for us!"

"We don't have to take a taxi home, Mommy. I don't mind. I have my new shoes. He doesn't even have any. I don't need anything else. Please Mommy, it's Christmas!"

Joseph's mother looked into her son's eyes and then at the poor boy and realised that in her haste to do something special for her son, she had missed the whole point of the Christmas gift giving.

"Of course. You're right," she said. "Here get him another slice of pizza too."

About the Author

Carol Ottley-Mitchell is the author of the Caribbean Adventure Series, a series about three children and a monkey who have exciting, magical adventures in the Caribbean. Visit www.CaribbeanAdventureSeries.com for more information.



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Born in Nevis, Carol has lived in several Caribbean countries. She spent a large part of her formative years in Trinidad, where one of her favorite pastimes was competing with her father to see who could compose the best humorous lyrics to existing songs. This was just the beginning of her interest in creative writing.

Back in St. Kitts, Carol began a more serious side of her writing career in high school when she wrote public service pieces and participated in several debating competitions. After leaving high school to pursue further studies in Barbados and the United States, Carol focused her efforts on developing her information technology and business management skills, while making every effort possible to write and participate in public speaking.

Currently, Carol lives in Ghana with her husband and children.