

YOUNG JEALOUSY



BY
HEATHER
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Young Jealousy

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It was a pleasant day after school; the sun was shining between the creamy clouds, birds sang from the trees, and the flowers jeweled the neighborhoods. Children's laughter could be heard from a park in the midst of apartments and houses, their smiles and cries of delight singing together with the birds.

An eight-year-old boy raced among the swings, leaped over the jungle gym, and ducked under the winding slides. His glowing eyes looked behind him as he ran, looking for his pursuer in their exciting game of tag. As the boy glanced back, his foot caught on a step and he fell to the grassy ground, rolling across it laughing. As he lie amid the grass, grinning from ear to ear, his follower raced to his side and leaped on top of him. The boy laughed again as his dog, a golden retriever puppy, laid his dirty paws on the boy's chest, the puppy's soft tongue licking his face. The child's name was Casey and his loyal friend was Max. Casey got to his feet and Max giddily leaped to and fro about the boy's legs, ready for a second round of tag.

"Okay, buddy," Casey said as he leaned down to the dog's eye level. Max happily licked his nose. "I'm it!" Max's ears perked up and he was off in a moment, kicking up bits of grass behind him.

"Casey!" The boy turned and saw his mother walking towards him. His Grandpa's arm was linked with hers as they carefully made their way to the park.

"Grandpa!" Casey cheered as he raced to the elderly man's side.

"Hey, trooper," Grandpa said and rested a hand on the child's head. "Having another adventure I see."

"Yep!" Casey said enthusiastically. "An' Max's it!"

"Ah . . . the best of adventures!"

"We have to go to the store now," his mother said. "Call Max and let's go, okay?"

"Okay," Casey said and turned to the park. "Max!" The three watched as the many excited children played, but there was no dog. "Max?" The light in Casey's eyes faded. "Max!" he called frantically. "Mommy where is he?" he cried, turning to his mother. "Where'd he go?" As his mother tried to comfort him, Casey noticed someone watching him from across the park.

Terry Martin, the troublemaking, fight picking, neighborhood bully. The middle schooler shrugged a very heavy and squirming backpack onto his shoulder; a cruel smile darkened his

brow. Casey's fear transformed into anger as he watched the sinister kid and his two henchmen grab their bikes and zip from the park, each looked at Casey with smug grins. The young boy's hand became a tight fist and a knot formed in his throat, knowing if he did not do something fast he would never see Max again! Casey surged forward and sprinted as fast as he could across the park.

"Casey!" his mother cried behind him. "Casey, come back here!"

"They've got Max!" the boy shouted. "They're gonna hurt him!" He continued to run and was unable to hear his mother's calls. He raced from the park, anger and the fear of losing Max surging him forward as only one thought filled his youthful mind: Get Max back! As he dashed down a street, a car pulled up beside him and the driver rolled down his window.

"Casey," Grandpa said, "get in the car."

"I've gotta get Max!" Casey gasped between breaths.

"I know, trooper, I'll drive you to get your friend back." Casey stopped running and glanced up at his Grandpa, his chest heaving and side aching. "Come on," the elder said. "Do you know where the bike boys are going?" Casey got into the car and they drove down the road.

"His house; it's down that way." The two did not speak for a moment as Casey caught his breath and Grandpa watched him closely. The timeworn man saw the look of determination edged in the boy's brow and the hard set of his jaw. He knew the boy was willing to do what it took to save Max.

"You're jealous," Grandpa said at last.

"What?" Casey asked, not understanding. "Jealous? Of who? Terry? No!" Casey vigorously shook his head. "Jealousy's bad, I'm not that."

"Why do you want Max back?" Grandpa asked.

Casey looked at him, his eyes wide at the absurdity of the question. "To protect him! To save him, to . . . to let him be happy!"

Grandpa nodded his head and smiled. "Yep," he said. "You're jealous."

Casey looked away as worry flashed across his eyes. "Then I'm bad?" he whispered for he knew God sees jealousy as sin.

"No, no, no," Grandpa said. "There're two types of jealousy; a bad and good one. The bad one's

when you fight for something only because you want it and you'll do anything, even hurt people, to get it. The good jealousy is when you fight for something because you want to save and protect it."

Casey looked back at his Grandpa as the wheels in his young mind turned. "So . . ." he said. "God likes my jealousy?"

"Casey," Grandpa said with a smile. "God does the good jealousy all the time, but He's not fighting to save and protect dogs. He fights to save and protect people, even people like Terry Martin." Casey looked at his hands, thinking. "I think I see Max," Grandpa said as he stopped the car across the street from a house. Casey looked up, seeing Terry and his boys stood around Max. "Do you want me to come with you?" Grandpa asked.

Casey shook his head. "God an' I got this," he said as he unbuckled his seatbelt. "We're both jealous; we'll get Max back." Grandpa watched as his grandson got out of the car and walked across the street.

That night, Max snuggled up to Casey as the boy slept, safe and sound beside his best friend.

