

BETH
AND THE **TRIO** OF
ANGELS

Sandra Finley Doran, Ed.D.



HART | BOOKS

P.O. Box 2377 Fallbrook, CA 92088



ThreeAngelsForKids.com

BETH AND THE TRIO OF ANGELS

by Sandra Doran, Ed.D.

Green Version

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level 5.3

22,897 Words

Designed by Mark Bond

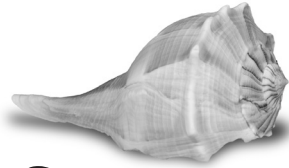


©2020 Hart Publishing.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Licensed to the NAD Office of Education

for use in Adventist education.



CHAPTER 1

BETH THREW HER BACKPACK INTO THE NISSAN, reluctantly sliding in beside her sister Pat in the back seat. Maybe the car would be out of gas. Maybe Mom would discover a nail in the tire. Maybe, by some miracle, they would have engine trouble.

Beth turned and faced the window, almost willing the car to remain stationary, stay rooted to the spot with a sudden streak of stubbornness. She held her breath, prayed for something to happen, begged the skies above to send a sudden answer. In the front seat her sister Meg chatted brightly with Mom.

Beth couldn't go to school. She couldn't face a class full of students at Medfield Christian, exchanging knowing looks, waiting for her to make her clumsy attempt at slinking into the classroom without being noticed.

Which was worse? An eerie silence, the clock ticking on the wall, Mrs. Starr distributing the day's assignments while the class smirked? Or the whole thing being played out in the open? Kids taunting her, not even trying to hide their glee at her misfortune.

Beth could barely look herself in the mirror, let alone face the whole class! Everybody must have heard about it by now. It was probably echoing down the halls, circulating from prekindergarten to eighth grade.

Mom turned the key, and the engine started, signaling the beginning of the ill-fated trip. The Nissan moved forward, sliding on to the main road as smoothly as a cool wind on a summer evening. The windshield wipers tapped a light rhythm, clicking off the distance between the safety of home and the threatening arrival ahead.

The idea of returning to school made Beth's head spin, sending her thoughts into flight like a flock of birds seeking cover from a coming storm. She reached up and massaged her temples, attempting to knead away the fear and worry that throbbed at the sides of her head in unforgiving waves.

“I hope this ride lasts forever,” she whispered under her breath. “I don’t want to go to school. I can’t do it. I just can’t do it. I will never be able to face the teacher, the other kids . . .”

Pat, the oldest, shifted slightly in Beth’s direction, facing her sister with a steely look in her eyes. “You have to get out of the car when we get to school, Beth. You don’t have a choice. Fourth graders don’t just drop out and get a job at Burger King.”

Outside, long green fields dotted with patches of wild daisies and late purple asters flew by the window, lending a false sense of peace to Beth’s crumbling world. Beth knew the route all too well. Just a few more miles, and the fields would give way to civilization—a Safeway grocery store and a dated, old Amoco gas station. One more sharp curve, and the Medfield post office would appear, followed by the First Baptist church, with its tall white spire.

In short order the inescapable would be upon her.

Mom would apply the brakes, taking the second left. In less than a half mile, the gleaming cross in front of the

Medfield Christian School would announce their arrival.

With each mile that passed, the sickening feeling in the pit of Beth's stomach intensified. How could she open the back door of the Nissan, step out into the school parking lot, sling her backpack over her shoulder, and risk seeing another fourth grader walking in her direction?

Risk seeing anybody, for that matter? The school secretary. The janitor. Or worst of all, Robbie Ladd, the biggest tease in the whole fourth grade. She couldn't even bear to allow her imagination to conjure up the scene for one moment longer.

From the front seat Meg, the next oldest, tossed her auburn curls and chatted as if it were just an ordinary school day. "Did you see what Ann Ross was wearing yesterday? I hope Mr. Miller is still recuperating from the flu. I really liked the substitute. I'm so glad it's pizza day. Are you going to try out for the girls' varsity basketball team?"

Just hearing her talk caused Beth's stomach to churn and tighten. The Nissan remained unforgivingly on

course, heading for Medfield Christian School. This was real. The car would arrive. She really was going to have to open the car door, navigate her way across the parking lot, direct her steps to the front entrance of the brick building, walk down the hall crowded with kids, face Mrs. Starr at Room 26B, nod and smile, cross in front of Robbie Ladd's desk, and slink into her seat. No matter what she might wish for, the road was being swallowed up like a long black snake with the end in sight.

Meg's voice faded in the front seat as Beth replayed the whole thing in her head. The day had started out almost perfectly yesterday. She had been so happy, so hopeful.

She remembered humming as she prepared to pack the materials for the science fair into the back of the Nissan. She had been so proud of her work. When Mrs. Starr announced the project several months back, she'd been more than ready.

The Nissan continued its course toward Medfield Christian School as Beth recalled how everything had started. Her thoughts rolled like the frothy waves on

the beach the day she'd come up with her idea for the school fair.

When she'd found the mysterious object in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, last summer, she had assumed it was a piece of seaweed. But a little research revealed that the chain of flat discs was actually a string of egg cases. Excited, she had cracked open one of the discs. Sure enough, out fell the tiniest shells she could ever imagine. The online article confirmed she had found an egg case of a channeled whelk.



Her mind immediately flew to the school's annual science fair. She had been convinced, right then and there, that she held a winner. The year before, she had been determined to seize a blue ribbon for her windmill project. But then she contracted the flu and could not complete the poster. Standing on the rugged coastline of Cape Cod, holding the sand-coated egg case, she'd resolved that this school year was going to be different.

“Beth?” Mom’s voice disturbed her thoughts. “I was asking if you’d like to be picked up early today or if you planned to stay after school for soccer.”

Remain after school? She didn’t even want to get out of the car! Didn’t want to associate herself with the place at all! Beth mumbled something to Mom and allowed her thoughts to roll like the waves once again.

Back home in Michigan, she’d carefully placed the tiny shells into an envelope. Then she’d slid the envelope and the string of egg cases into a shoe box and placed it on the top shelf in the hall closet.

The next step had been to find a mature channeled whelk shell. Medfield, Michigan, was not exactly beside the Atlantic Ocean! She remembered wracking her brain to determine how she might obtain the shell.

Saving her dog-walking money to make an online purchase had been a brainstorm! Each Friday she had put aside 50 cents for tithe and offering and added the remaining dollar to the jar on her dresser. Within short order she had saved enough to order the beautiful pink-and-tan shell.

How excited she had been when the small package finally arrived with the gleaming whelk inside! Placing the treasured item in the shoe box with the egg case and tiny grainlike shells, she had let out a contented sigh. Everything appeared to be falling into place.

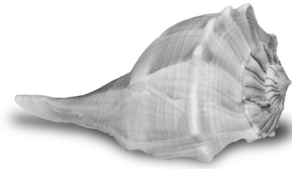
It had seemed like forever before Mrs. Starr finally announced the date for the fair and spelled out the new requirements. How her thoughts had hummed! She had suspected Mrs. Starr was going to ask for at least one Bible text! Tucked safely in the shoebox was an index card with 1 Chronicles 16:9 carefully printed:

*Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
talk of all His wondrous works!*

Six weeks had gone by quickly as she conducted her research, prepared her display, crafted her report, and created her poster. She was especially proud of the poster. It had taken hours to measure and draw the lines to keep her printing straight and even. And there, right in the middle, she glued three egg cases and a handful of the miniature shells.

She had been so excited yesterday as she carefully packed all her materials and placed everything in the trunk of Mom's Nissan! How could she have guessed what would happen before she could proudly set it all up in the school gym? Oh, how she wished she could have given herself an advance warning yesterday as she prepared to leave the house!

Beth broke from her thoughts, facing the reality of her situation. With mounting fear, she peered out the window as her destination grew closer. What was she going to do?



CHAPTER 2

BETH'S HEART POUNDED RAPIDLY, BEATING OUT a steady rhythm as Mom turned the Nissan on to Pine Ridge Boulevard. She continued to recall the humiliating events of the day before, as if the torturous nightmare had just happened five minutes ago.

Arriving at the school, she had proudly gathered up her science fair materials, planning to convey everything to her classroom in two trips. She managed to deliver the display and written report to the gymnasium by the time Mom crept to the front of the car line. Grabbing the poster, she signaled goodbye with a nod of her head, watching as her mother navigated the vehicle on to the main road.

Beth groaned. Why did the weather off Lake Michigan have to be so unpredictable? Why hadn't she noticed

the sudden turn of temperature, the gray clouds rolling across the sky like a herd of wild, stampeding elephants?

It had taken only a minute for the poster to be mercilessly ripped out of her arms. In the midst of a drenching rain, she chased the large board across the schoolyard, finally reuniting with her precious cargo beside the basketball court. The neatly drawn manuscript letters had disappeared, replaced by watery streams of blue and red. The once-bold heading faded its way into an obscure blur. All her time, all her hard work, had been for nothing.

But that was not the worst part. Beth grimaced as she recalled the events that followed.

Standing there, the wind whipping her brown hair in every direction, she had felt a large sob convulsing in her throat. She hadn't wanted to cry. Hadn't wanted to humiliate herself in front of the whole school. But there was no way she could manage to stifle the pained noises arising from somewhere deep inside her.

On an impulse, she had turned and bolted for the door to the building with just one goal. Stay out of the

line of sight, make it to the girls' room, barricade herself behind a stall before anyone could catch a glimpse of who she was . . .

Beth gripped the handles of her backpack and recalled the details with mounting horror. In the front seat she noticed Meg's lips moving, but heard nothing. All she could concentrate on was the appalling scenario of the day before.

Just as she dashed across the schoolyard, she heard the screeching brakes of the school bus announcing its unfortunate arrival. The timing could not have been worse. She arrived in the building, hedged in by a crowd of clamoring students, Robbie Ladd's face floating somewhere in the middle. She recalled trying to cough back a sob and discovering that the more she tried to control her crying, the more the wracking convulsions took over her whole body.

Everything had escalated after that. She remembered bolting blindly for the bathroom and locking herself in the stall. She would never know if her continued sobs came from forfeiting her chance at the blue ribbon or

from the sheer humiliation of melting down in front of the entire school. The whole chain of events had been the perfect storm.

She had stayed in the bathroom for what seemed like an eternity. She would never forget listening to kids calling out, lockers slamming, and then the deafening silence. If her best friend Jazmin had not come to investigate, who knows what would have happened next.

With relief, she had asked Jazmin to tell Mrs. Starr she felt ill and to go call her mom. It had not been easy staying out of sight until Jazmin passed word that her mom was waiting in front of the school. When she finally emerged from the stall, she caught sight of her own face in the mirror. Her red eyes swelled with puffiness. Fluid streamed from her nose. Lines streaked their way down her cheeks. She vowed she would never set foot in the school again.

Beth let out a long breath. Her feelings had not changed in the past 24 hours. The campus represented nothing but pain and humiliation.

Mom applied the brakes, and Beth realized they were in the driveway of the Medfield Christian School. The

moment of truth hung heavily upon her. Did she have the courage to open the car door and walk boldly toward the school building? Could she face the harsh judgment of her own classmates? If not, would Mom allow her to remain in the back seat, returning home in silence?

“Beth.” Her sister Pat was shaking her. “Grab your backpack, and let’s go!”

Beth fought to hear her own thoughts above the insistent clamoring of her heart. What would happen if she refused to get out of the car? What if she remained rooted to the spot and never even looked back?

But that was ridiculous. As much as she hated to admit it, Pat was right. You couldn’t join the ranks of high school dropouts when you were in the fourth grade. But maybe she could find another place to continue her education. Maybe there was some kind of a safe harbor for kids who had humiliated themselves in front of their previous school. Kids who needed a fresh start, an extreme makeover. Maybe a whole bunch of kids just like her roamed the earth, all converging at a school that knew nothing of their shameful past. Kids who just

wanted to put a bag over their heads and never face the world again. It was definitely worth the investigation.

“Let’s go!” Now it was Meg who seemed to be out of patience. She turned around and nudged her. Pat waited outside, anxiously tapping her foot. Mom put the car into gear, focusing on the car line ahead.

As if in a dream, Beth found herself swinging her feet out of the Nissan. She managed to straighten up, pivot, and point her wooden body toward the school. Already her sisters were several steps ahead, eager to catch up with their friends and resume their never-ending chatter.

Beth dragged her feet, still hoping against hope that she could avoid the unavoidable, that something would prevent her from arriving at her destination. Slowly navigating her way across the parking lot, she found herself thinking about a time she had been invited to a friend’s house for dinner.

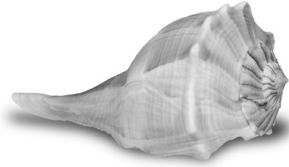
They had served some type of inedible lima bean concoction, the putrid beans all mashed up in a white gravy. As her friend’s mom had dropped a sickening scoop onto her plate, she had realized that politeness

left her with only two choices. She could mix the liquid mass up with the rice and hope the resulting dish was less concentrated, or quickly devour the whole thing and so end the torture.

She had not hesitated in making her decision. She remembered holding her breath, forking the mass into one steaming glob, and swallowing it whole.

That was exactly what she must do now. Rise above the storm. Hold her head high. Get to the classroom as quickly as she could. Face the situation head-on.

Beth picked up her pace. Whatever was going to happen, she was bound and determined to get it over with as quickly as possible.



CHAPTER 3

JUST AS BETH APPROACHED THE BUILDING, SHE spotted Jazmin, sprinting toward her as if she were in the 50-yard dash.

“I thought you’d never arrive!” Jazmin called out, trying to catch her breath as she fell into step beside her friend, her neat cornrows glistening in the bright sun. Linking her arm in Beth’s, Jazmin confidently charted the course to the classroom.

“Let’s hurry before the bell rings.”

Beth felt her clamoring heart begin to resume its normal pace. Everything seemed normal. Jazmin was smiling. She had not even mentioned yesterday’s humiliating fiasco. Perhaps she had forgotten about the whole embarrassing episode. Perhaps it had been miraculously