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Episode 3 -- DANGER LURKS!

By Ed Simmons, Jr. (Patch Poster) - (<http://patch.com/users/ed-simmons-jr>) August 13, 2013 1:34 pm ET (<http://my.patch.com/article/17700939/edit>)

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By Edgar Littlefellow

Danger is an ever present threat to a field mouse like me. When I was homeless in the woods I lived in fear of owls and hawks. Their talons are so fearful! Wiggly snakes are even scarier!

So when I found a home at Rising Hope Mission Church which aids the homeless and not-so-extremely-wealthy along Route 1, I thought my troubles were over. Little did I suspect danger lurked.

It had been such a peaceful and pleasant week at Rising Hope. Every morning I luxuriated sleeping late in my mouse hole in Pastor Keary's study. I loved my comfortable purple sleeping nest snug between the walls thanks to the ladies in the Wednesday afternoon crochet class who generously left their purple yarn unguarded. Each morning I spent my first hour in prayer and contemplation. There were so many things to be thankful for! I rejoiced in my piles of Cheez Doodles, Sugar-Frosted Flakes, Sweet Chrunchees and Cinnamon Cheerios all heaped neatly in my mouse hole.

I also made home improvements. Gnawing the electric wires and dragging in an unneeded light bulb, with a little finagling I now had electric light. Sometimes sparks shot off but I didn't worry. At Rising Hope, I was in God's hands.

I also decided that what I needed to make my mouse hole complete was a portrait of Jesus. After all because of him all field mice go to heaven. Even some gray, beady-eyed house mice get to go too if they repent and ask forgiveness for running over ladies' feet causing them to shriek. They must also ask forgiveness for crawling unhygienically on kitchen counters.

But where could I find a miniature portrait of Jesus? I paced in my mouse hole wondering. Finally I remembered to pray and the Holy Spirit said, "Paint your own!"

What I needed was a paint brush, watercolors, a black ink pen and a 3-by-5 white index card. I ran along the baseboard into the office where volunteers and staff workers Maryellen, Deborah, Jamie, Kat and Monica labored. I told them what I needed and in a very mouse-friendly way they sent me upstairs to see Sula who is the children's minister. I found her working at her desk and explained what I wanted to do.

"So you know what Jesus looks like?" she asked.

"Oh yes," I assured her and she fixed me up. Making several trips, I hauled my new paint brush, pen, watercolors and index card back to my mouse hole. I leaned the card next to my light bulb and with a bottle cap full of water set to work. A whole day later I finished in time for noon chapel. Taking the portrait with me, I hopped upstairs to the sanctuary certain I had a good likeness.

Venisa was giving the message. About twenty people were there, some with bags and suitcases, some looking worried and hungry, all with lots of prayer requests. Venisa prayed for them all. After chapel they went downstairs hungry for the hot lunch and I showed her my portrait of Jesus.

"How nice!" she said with a sparkling, pretty smile. "There's just one thing..."

"Oh?"

"I don't think Jesus had big round ears..."

Wanting another opinion I dragged the portrait downstairs to the Milk and Honey Food Pantry to show volunteers Debbie, Alan, Andy and Ruth. They were hard at work stocking the shelves with donations for when all the hungry people line up out into the hall. All four are volunteers and Ruth is almost one hundred years old. She told me once that the secret to long life is volunteering. She squinted down at me in a kindly way, her eyes crinkling at the corners. “What do you have there, Edgar?”

“A portrait of Jesus!”

She picked it up and they gathered round to look.

Andy scratched his head and raised his eyebrows. “I’ve never seen a mouse with a beard before...”

I squeaked in protest. “It’s not a mouse! It’s Jesus!”

“Okay, okay,” said Ruth in her sweet way. “Maybe you can take this out in the woods to preach to the other field mice?”

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Me? Preach to the field mice? But field mice are already saved! I looked up into Ruth’s kind eyes. “Not to contradict you, Ruth, but it’s the house mice that need the preaching. They run over ladies’ feet. They’re unhygienic on kitchen counters. They nibble electric wires and burn houses down.”

“Well maybe you can preach to them,” said Debbie. “Show them the error of their ways.”

“But if they repent and go to heaven they’ll overrun the place!”

“There’s plenty of room up there,” said Alan.

They gave me two Skittles which I packed in my cheeks and I headed back to my mouse hole with the portrait. I decided I’d show it to Pastor Keary and ask him about what I must do to preach to sinful house mice. Would I need to go to seminary?

The next day, Friday, was the fateful day. I was outside helping with God’s Bounty – the free produce give-away Rising Hope has the fourth Friday of every month, when the dreaded vehicle pulled up. It was an animal’s worst fear...

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Curious about Rising Hope? Come visit! Drop by Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to noon and introduce yourself. Ask for a tour! Volunteer! Donate! Or just snoop around! Worship at our Noon Chapel Service and stay for lunch!

You are also invited to our Open House on Sunday, Sept. 8 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Then for a romantic evening of dinner and dancing and helping with God's work at the same time come to our Fall Gala on Friday, Oct. 4 from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. at The Waterford in Springfield. Tickets are \$100 each and can be ordered online at RisingHopeUMC.org.

And, if the Spirit moves you, host a dinner party to benefit Rising Hope. Rev. Kincannon will attend to tell about Rising Hope's mission. I might just be there too tickling a few ankles.

Rising Hope Mission Church

A United Methodist Congregation

8220 Russell Road, Alexandria, VA, 22309

703-360-1976

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