

JENNY BELONGS

By Gretchen Keith

A chapter from the book of stories about heaven, *The Life to Come*

A young girl lay asleep, her blond hair curling on the pillow. She woke up and looked around her. She had been very ill, and she thought she was dying. Before she fell asleep, her mom and dad had been holding her hands, smiling at her through their tears. Where were they now?

The door of her room opened, and a lovely woman walked in. The girl thought she must be a nurse. "Hello, Jenny," the woman said. "How are you feeling?" Jenny realized that she felt much better. There was no pain! "Would you like to come for a walk, Jenny?"

Jenny said, "I don't think I'm strong enough to walk." But when the lovely woman asked her to stand up and try, Jenny was amazed. She could walk!

"Where are my mom and dad? I want to show them how much better I am!" said Jenny. The woman looked sad for a moment. Then she asked if Jenny had heard of heaven.

"My mom and dad talk about heaven a lot," Jenny answered. "They say that children go to heaven when they die. The children grow up there and become angels. Can you tell me more about heaven?"

The woman smiled kindly at her. Jenny was sure she had never met anyone as pleasant. Then she figured it out.

"I'm in heaven, aren't I? And you must be an angel!"

"Yes," said the angel, "you are in heaven. That's why you're well now."

"Will I really be an angel someday?" Jenny asked.

"Yes, I think you will be a fine angel. You'll grow up here, and you will learn to be wise and good as the angels are. Then you will be an angel, too."

Jenny was a little worried. She sometimes told lies and did other bad things. Maybe she didn't really belong here.

But the angel told her, "Please don't worry. You do belong here. And the Lord will help you to become an angel. None of us would be an angel without His help. Come now. Let me show you to your new home."

The angel led Jenny to a stone house surrounded by gardens. Jenny saw a beautiful woman standing by the door. She wore a purple dress made of shining silk. Her blue eyes were gentle, and her face was shining with light. Jenny liked her right away.

"Welcome, Jenny! I'm your angel mother, Kara. I have been looking forward to your coming!"

Would you like to see your new home?"

Jenny looked at the gardens and the beautiful house. Did she truly belong here? It was too wonderful. The angel who had brought her to this home hugged Jenny and said, "You will be happy here. The Lord chose this home for you, and He always knows what is best. I'll come visit you soon, Jenny." And with these words the angel left them.

Kara led Jenny into the stone house. Jenny found herself in a large room arranged for dining and visiting. Then she entered a courtyard with a rose garden and a fountain of gold. She saw three girls playing catch with a silver ball. They seemed to be about her age, about eight years old. When the girls saw Jenny, they hurried to greet her. They all talked at once, welcoming her and asking her questions. Jenny liked these friendly girls, and she enjoyed talking with them.

Then Kara said, "Let me show you the bedrooms, Jenny. Each of the girls has her own room. This one is yours." Jenny thought the room was lovely. It was her favorite shade of blue. And the bed was covered with a lacy white bedspread that matched the curtains at the window.

"Did you know that I was coming? This room is all ready for me."

Kara smiled and said, "The Lord gives us our houses. He makes them in an instant, and He changes them, too. When He added this room, we knew another girl would be coming soon. Look, Jenny! Did you see your copy of the Word on the dresser? And here is a closet filled with pretty dresses the Lord has given you. He gives us our food, our clothing, and everything else we need."

"Heaven is just as wonderful indoors as it is out!" said Jenny. "I have never seen so many beautiful things. And it is so kind of the Lord to give me this lovely room and the pretty dresses!"

At dinner, Jenny met Galen, Kara's husband. He was handsome and strong. And when Kara was near Galen, they both glowed with happiness. Jenny could tell that they loved each other very much. Seeing them together reminded her of her parents, and she felt sad. When Galen asked her what was wrong, she told him she missed her parents.

"You miss them because you love them very much. But you'll see them again, Jenny. Why don't you try to become the best angel you can be? Then think how happy your parents will be when they meet their angel in heaven!" Following dinner they had family worship. When they said the Lord's prayer, Jenny was surprised at the beautiful thoughts about the Lord that came into her head. Then Galen read from the Word about the boy Samuel who left his family to serve the Lord with Eli, the priest. Jenny guessed that he had chosen this story because of her coming to a new home, closer to the Lord. She decided to try to serve the Lord well, like Samuel. Then her new family stood in a circle, held hands and sang to the Lord. After worship everyone hugged each other and went off to bed. Jenny felt very much at home, but she wondered what the next day would bring.

Early in the morning Jenny's new sisters bounced into her bedroom to help her get ready for school. Each sister suggested a different dress for Jenny to wear that day. Jenny smiled and thanked them for their help. Then she put on a blue dress because she wanted to wear her

favorite color for her first full day in heaven. After breakfast her sisters led her to school, dancing along the path.

Jenny found that her new school was in a lovely grove of trees. Her sisters took her to meet the teacher, Lauren, and Jenny felt shy. "All angels are beautiful," she thought, "and their faces look wise and kind." Lauren smiled at Jenny and sat beside her. School began with Lauren asking the girls to think about the Lord as their heavenly Father. Jenny had learned from Kara that all the angels and children in heaven know the Lord is their Father who takes care of them. Jenny felt happy and safe knowing that the Lord was watching over her.

Then Lauren asked them to thank the Lord for His many gifts to them. Jenny thanked Him for her new home, her new family, and her healthy spiritual body. The girls joined together in prayer, and then Lauren read to them from the Word. Closing the Word, she said, "Now we'll go for a walk. As we walk, look at everything around you, and tell me what it brings to your mind."

Jenny looked around at the high mountains, the sloping meadows, and the blue streams of water. She looked at trees stretching toward the sky and at fields of flowers. But nothing came to her mind.

One girl said, "When I see the mountains, I think of loving the Lord."

Another girl pointed to a stream nearby and said, "The stream is like truth from the Lord."

Then Jenny said, "I like the flowers because they are pretty." A girl laughed at her, and Jenny wished she could run away home. But one of her sisters came to her side and told her to look at the girl's dress. It was covered with spots! The girl felt sorry for being unkind to Jenny, and when she apologized to her, the spots went away. Although Jenny felt better, she wondered if she would ever know as much as the other girls.

The girls returned to their school. They played games in which they worked on cooperation. They sang as a choir. And for the last part of the morning, they worked on individual projects. Some girls painted pictures or did embroidery. Others played musical instruments or wrote in their journals. Jenny wrote in her journal:

Heaven is sunshine and wonderful places.
Heaven is love and many kind faces.
Heaven is worship, prayer, and song,
Doing what's right, not what's wrong.

To herself Jenny added, "But do I really belong?"

At noon the girls went home for a luncheon of fruit soup, cheese casserole, salad, raisin muffins, cider, and cake. Jenny wondered aloud if they ever had to eat things they didn't like, but her sisters seemed surprised by her question. They said that all the food in heaven was delicious!

After lunch Jenny's angel mother took her outside to a new garden. "The Lord has made this garden for you, Jenny." The young girl looked around, enchanted with the garden. There were flowers that sparkled like jewels and flowers that glittered with gold and silver. One part of the

garden was a rainbow of color: first a circle of red flowers, then one of yellow, one of blue, and finally, a circle of bright green flowers in the center.

“It’s more beautiful than anything I could have imagined. What wonderful things there are in heaven!” said Jenny.

Lauren said, “One of the special things about your garden is that the flowers change. They grow lovelier when you are doing well. But the flowers begin to fade if you have done or thought something wrong.” Jenny hoped she could be good all the time so her garden would always be gorgeous.

That afternoon Jenny’s teacher, Lauren, met the girls at a meadow where many children were playing. Jenny saw boys playing baseball and others running races. Some girls played tennis, and others pretended they were angels doing jobs in heaven: helping newcomers, teaching children, directing choirs, and many other jobs. Jenny’s sisters called her to join a lively game of tag. And later some of the boys and girls came to meet Jenny. They had heard that she was a newcomer, and they wanted to welcome her.

When the light began to grow dim, all the children went to their homes. Jenny told her new family about her first whole day in heaven. “This was the best day of my life,” she said. “Heaven really is a wonderful place!”

Galen said, “We’re glad to have you here, Jenny.”

“Do you think my mom and dad know that I’m happy?” Jenny asked.

“Yes, dear,” said Kara. “I think they know.” Then Galen and Kara gave Jenny a gift they had made for her, a beautiful wooden box with gold flowers on it. And her new sisters gave her a Word marker they had embroidered. Jenny felt surrounded by love.

Later, when it was evening and Jenny was ready for bed, she saw a new dress in her closet. It was light blue with gold stars that sparkled. Jenny was amazed at its beauty, and she wondered why the Lord had given her a new dress. Then she remembered what Kara had told her about her special garden. The dress must be a sign from the Lord that she had done well that day. Jenny held the dress to her and twirled around the room. She said, “Father in heaven, thank You!”

Now Jenny knew she belonged.

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, nor be dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).