



Chapter 36

Inspector Spritz

*“Honor your father and mother”—which is
the first commandment with a promise.”*

EPHESIANS 6:2

It was early in the evening, almost twilight. The summer was full blown. Warm winds stirred up the dust and pollen as well as our desires for outdoor adventures. Anticipation was in the air around the camp. The season’s wildlife was actively delivering litters of raccoons, squirrels, and birds of prey.

“Mom, can I go down to the pond and throw my line in for a little while? The fish ought to be biting by now.” The longer days and absence of schoolwork allowed time for extra evening activities.

“Yes, and be sure to take your flashlight. *Better safe than sorry.* Darkness sneaks up on you before you know it, and who knows what you’ll run into out here in the country.”

“Okay, thanks, Mom. I’ll come straight home before dark.”

“Bye, love you. Hope you catch a big one!” I ushered him out the door with a blessing. Alex fled to the shed to get his fishing gear.

We loved living high on a hill. We could watch from afar as fishermen of all sorts threw their poles in the fishing hole. Alex was the only one out tonight, and watching for him to pull in his big catch was a mother's treat. The sun disappeared over the horizon bringing welcome relief from its rays.

From my window look-out, I caught a glimpse of Alex's white t-shirt. He stood perfectly still so as not to alert the fish of his presence. *The fish must not be biting tonight*, I thought. It was getting darker, and thinking Alex would be coming home soon, I started cleaning up the supper dishes and soon lost track of time. The clock ticked away, and when I looked up, it was completely dark.

He should be back by now, I thought. I was not panicked. The camp was perfectly safe, and he had been in clear view from the house. Peering out the window, I could not see the white t-shirt, or much of anything else even though the moon was on the rise. *He must be at the recreation room*, I thought. It was not uncommon to find a small group gathered for a game of foosball or tetherball on these hot summer nights. So, I jumped in the car to go find Alex. I was not concerned, just aware of the time.

Driving on the hill near the cabins, I turned on my bright lights looking for the white t-shirt. Shining my state-of-the-art, dazzling flashlight that we called "Torch" out the window, I caught a glimpse of Rick, the maintenance man, finishing some evening work.

"Rick, have you seen Alex tonight?" In our small community, we watched over one another.

"Yes, I saw him just about fifteen minutes ago walking around the pond toward the burn pile. He had his fishing pole with him."

"Oh okay, he must have gone to dig for worms. Thanks, Rick, I'll catch up with him. See you later." The burn pile was on the way home, so I figured Alex was headed in the right direction. There was no further need for me to continue looking for him; he would be home soon.



The moon was high and bright, and the critters were out in numbers. Glancing out my bedroom window, I could see the moon reflecting on the road that curved around in front of our house. Still, there was no Alex. I was picking up around the house, preparing to call it a night, when I heard the back door close.

I smelled him before I saw him. “Alex, is that you?”

In a low whisper, he answered, “Yes, Ma’am.” A thud followed his words, and the floorboards creaked. I went into the kitchen and flipped on the light. There was Alex with a long look on his face. His tackle box was plopped down beside him—the cause of the thud.

“Alex, you got spritzed!”

“Just a little.”

“It smells like he got you big time!” The stench quickly permeated through the house. I winced but felt relieved that he was home safe and sound. His eyes were glazed over like a sleep-walker.

“Why don’t you go wash up, and then you can tell me what happened.” After sponging down in tomato juice, bathing and changing his clothes, Alex continued his story.

“I ran into trouble on the way back from the pond,” he explained.

“Trouble? What do you mean?” I was anxious to hear the whole story.

“The fish weren’t biting, so I went digging for worms. Then I heard something moving in an old, rotten log.” His lips quivered as he spoke.

“What happened next?” I listened intently.

“I heard the leaves rustling,” he continued. “When I moved to take a closer look, there was a loud hiss, and before I knew it, I was face to tail with a skunk. Mom, I was flabbergasted! I thought it was a cat. I tore out of there as fast as I could, but he still got me.”

“You couldn’t tell what it was with your flashlight?”



“Well, actually, Mom, I didn’t take my flashlight with me this time. I thought just this one time I didn’t need it. I thought I’d be home before dark. It’s a good thing he didn’t spray me more than he did.”

“Why, you smell like he doused you from head to toe, Inspector Spritz! Looks like leaving your flashlight got you just a little spritzed. Sin is like that too, Alex. A little spritz, a lot of spritz, it all stinks the same. And, that’s the *gist of it*—next time, obey in the small things, too!”

“Yes, and it’ll be a long time before I go around inspecting logs or anything else in the dark. And next time, I’ll come straight home like I told you. God showed me through this that I need to honor you at all times.”

“That’s a great idea, Alex. Let’s commit this smelly lesson to memory with a glass of tomato juice.” We raised our glasses together. “And now for a toast: Three cheers to no stinky sins!”

Skunks’ defense is so effective that it is seldom attacked. First-time, naive predators quickly learn to avoid skunks. The primary predator of the skunk is the great horned owl. Spritz is another word for spray. Skunks will also hiss and whine when they are scared. Skunks can carry rabies which can make them unpredictable. NEVER approach a wild animal, especially a skunk.



Discussion

How would taking a flashlight have made a difference in this story? What is the analogy between a flashlight and God's Word? How does obeying your parents demonstrate honor to them and to God? Why is it so important to obey in small things as well as big things?



Scripture

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." Luke 16:10

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3

Song

"This Little Light of Mine" and "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow"

Activity

On a sunny day, have a water balloon or squirt gun party, and remember Inspector Spritz.

Application

Shine a flashlight against the wall and make shadow puppets. Be creative, and act out a skit with your puppets. Memorize Ephesians 6:2. Craft a plaque of the phrase: "Blessings Follow Obedience." Place it in a central location as a reminder. Pick a night to serve tomato juice, with a "cheers" to no stinky sins!

Idiom

Gist of it means the main point of something.

Better safe than sorry means caution can prevent problems later.

Prayer

Pray and ask the Lord to help you honor your Mother and Father. Thank Him for the blessings that come from obedience.