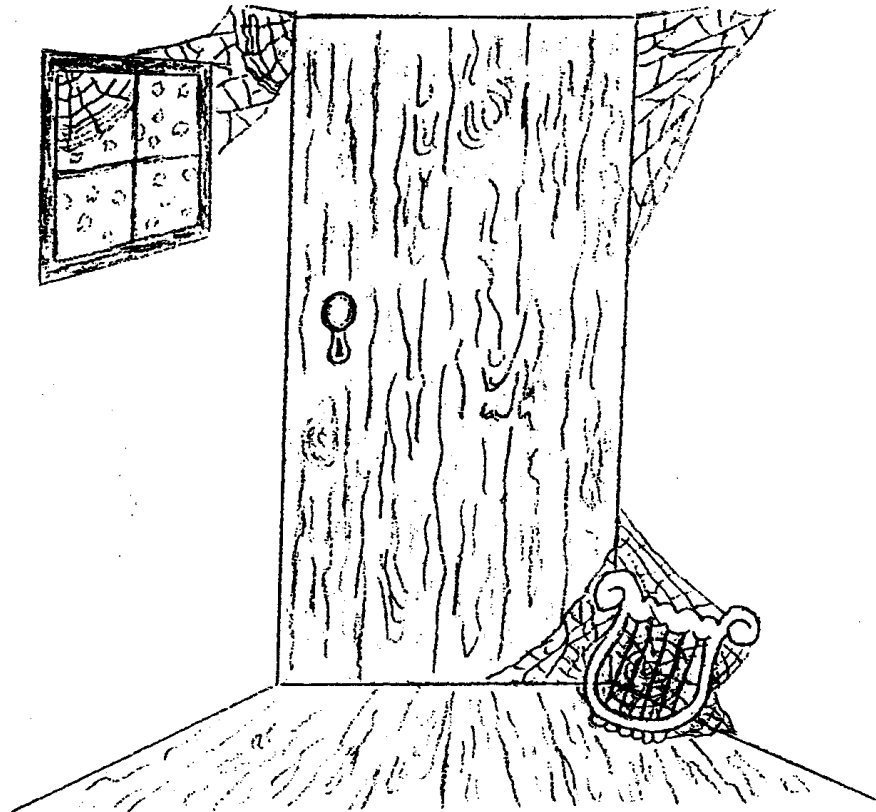


Silent Harp



The small room was dimly lit. Layers of dust clung to the little harp. Cobwebs were woven through his strings into a sad design. How long he had been there he did not know. A year? A hundred years? No one in the family had known how to get him to play and sing. And so he had been hidden away, considered an oddity, an embarrassment, and of no worth.

All he had was time . . . time to remember the things he had seen and heard and felt before being sentenced to this terribly lonely place. He could hear the sounds of life outside the door, but couldn't open it and join in the fun, *and* the pain of life. He had tried more times than could be counted to move his strings and sing, but he could not. If only he had one more chance. . . . Maybe then, he could be what he was meant to be.

Each morning a shaft of sunlight streamed through the small window and gave him renewed hope that perhaps *this* was the day his nightmare would end. Then every night a great sorrow overtook him as the sun withdrew his hope. But on clear evenings the moon and stars peeked in on him and gave him a slight caress of comfort. On those nights he prayed for help.

One night, as he was falling asleep to the lullaby of cold breezes flinging snowflakes against the window, he saw a bright light through his eyelids. He opened his eyes and saw an angel with wings, shining like a gold star, standing in his little room. She picked him up and blew all the dust and cobwebs off him. Then she flew out the window with the silent harp under her arm.

And then he saw all the others - thousands and thousands of angels in the illuminated sky! It was so bright that it was like the middle of the day! They sang together a beautiful symphony of perfect harmony. He listened closely to the words of their magnificent song: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."* Trumpets, violins, flutes, harps, and many other instruments were accompanying them, in the glorious concert.

The silent harp looked down from the sky to the earth. He thought with all this loud music and bright light, people would be looking out their windows and running outside and stopping their cars, to see and hear this unusual spectacle in the sky. But then he noticed the gloomy glows of the television sets seeping out the windows of each house. A few people who were walking down the street or in their driveways, were apparently blind and deaf to this show on Heaven's channel.

"How sad," he thought, "that they can't see and hear and *know*. I thought *I* was alone, but their hollow eyes tell they are just as alone and full of sadness and hopelessness as I was!"

The angel took the silent harp from under her arm and embraced him. Then she raised her hand. All the angels stopped singing and the instruments stopped playing. "Let's listen to our dear silent harp," she said. With that she ran her fingers over his stiff strings and played the most beautiful melody he had ever heard.

"How can this be coming from *me*?!" he wondered, as his strings became flexible and vibrated with life.

Cars screeched to a stop, doors swung open, windows were raised, feet stopped in their tracks, eyes were lifted, and all was hushed. Hearts were softened and stirred to hear the silent harp play his sweet carol of praise to Emmanuel - the God who came to be with us, born as a baby to grow up and do the terribly lonely and painful work of saving us.

Suddenly, the enormous cloud of angels separated, and the harp with new-found voice, saw the curtain of Heaven pulled open! *There* he saw a radiant face, aflame with a love he knew nothing could ever put out! *There*, the eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful God and Savior of the world, smiled with the greatest tenderness and love, at the people who were celebrating His birthday, 2,000 years after the first Christmas Eve!

*Luke 2:14

