



## Book 8: Holiday Blessings

By Brian Combs

The Homestead Kids Book Series

[www.thehomesteadkidsbooks.com](http://www.thehomesteadkidsbooks.com)

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## Chapter 1 - It's snowing?

As the car pulled down the driveway, the two oldest sisters of the family were looking out the car windows. They never got tired of staring at the tall pine trees towering over their homestead. But this time they were looking at the ground, instead of up at the trees, as they neared the house. Rosie and Michelle stared hard at the white feathers scattered all across the yard. It almost looked like it had snowed! But it had only snowed right beside the barn? The girls looked at each other questioningly, wondering what on earth had happened.

Those were their turkey's feathers! Had an animal gotten to the turkeys?

Mom smiled as she looked at the girls faces in the rearview mirror. She pulled the car to a stop and waited, sure enough, the moment the car stopped, Rosie and Michelle both jumped out and took off running towards the barn.

"OOOPH" Michelle crashed into Rosie's back. Unable to catch herself Michelle bobbed crazily for a moment then fell sideways to the ground. "Oooph" she said again.

Rosie had turned and tried to catch Michelle's arm before she went down but had missed. Now she stood there looking down and smashed her lips together trying not to smile. At 11 years old, Rosie tried to be a good big sister and set a good example and Mom had said it was never - EVER - nice to smile or laugh when someone gets hurt. If the person is hurt, it's never funny. But sometimes it was sure hard holding the laugh until you knew for sure if the other



person was hurt. Especially when it was her best friend and 9-year-old sister Michelle. Michelle could make the craziest faces when surprised or startled. It was hard to not laugh.

“Rosie!” Michelle gasped, “Why on earth did you...”

Before Michelle could finish her sentence Rosie, bending down over Michelle to help her up said, “Chelle, DO NOT move.”

Michelle, confused and surprised, her face showing just how bewildered she felt as she lay sprawled on the ground now looked concerned, “What? What’s wrong?”

Rosie offered a hand to help her up and said, “Just pull straight up, don’t go to the side at all. I’m serious! Straight up!”

Nervous, but anxious to be up quickly now Michelle grabbed Rosie’s hand and pulled herself up. Immediately she looked back down to see what Rosie was so serious about.

There, right next to where she’d fallen, was a huge nasty looking clump of a hairball that one of the cats must have

coughed up. “UGH” she said. “UGH!” she said again even more emphatically, “Thanks, Rosie, for keeping me from getting into *that!*”

“No problem,” Rosie replied unable to stop grinning at how funny it could have been.

“But why did you stop like that anyway?” asked Michelle.

“Because I saw where the white feathers were coming from. I was surprised. Look!” Rosie turned and pointed just through the barn door. On the other side of the barn was an opening, and at that wide opening Dad was standing there. He had two turkey’s he’d already butchered and was plucking them in preparation for their Thanksgiving feast.

“Whoa!” said Michelle, “Hey Dad! Can we help?”

“I was hoping you would!” Dad responded, “There’s some gloves over on that table with my supplies; aprons for each of you also so your clothes don’t get too messy.”



Both girls quickly ran to the table and donned gloves and the aprons. Each helping the other tie the apron at the back. They laughed and snapped the gloves with their hands raised up and Rosie joked “Dr Rosie and Nurse Chelle, are ready for the operation!”

Dad pointed them to the second turkey on the other end of his long table. “That one is ready, pluck away. But if you can, try and keep the feathers in a pile. Mom will be able to use them in the garden. They’ve got a lot of nutrients that the soil can use to help our plants grow.”

The girls got to work. After Dad had butchered the turkey, he’d soaked it in scalding hot water. That made most of the feathers pull out with ease. The girls carefully worked to get all the ones they could. They then switched turkeys with Dad so they could work on his turkey while he got out some of the harder tail feathers. Instead of pulling the tail feathers though, Dad cut off the small knob of skin that held the tail feathers together. He fanned it out

just like the turkeys do to show off. The girls were amazed!

“This guy broke some of his feathers off, playing around with the other turkeys,” Dad said, “But if this fan were in better condition, we could have saved it to mount on the wall.”

“Umm, nope!”

“So cool!”

Both girls had responded at the same time and turned to look at each other while they laughed. “It *would* be cool.” Michelle repeated. “Sure,” responded Rosie, “Just so long as you don’t decide you want to keep one in our room.”

“Not anything we need to discuss today though,” Dad broke in, “none of these fans are in good enough condition for mounting. But now that we’ve got the feathers out, let’s get these turkeys in some ice water. That will help them cool down quickly, so they’ll be nice and tender for Thanksgiving dinner!”

The girls helped haul buckets of ice Dad had been collecting and storing in the freezer and filled an ice chest with water

and ice. Dad cleaned the turkeys off and then put them into the ice chest while the girls started cleaning up the rest of the worktable.

Stuffing most of the feathers into an old trash can, Rosie claimed the job of hauling the can over to Mom's garden area. While Michelle claimed half of the ice chest and helped carry it to the house.

Picking up his half of the ice chest Dad asked, "Did you guys have a good time in town?"

"We did! I love our dates with mom. We made these little pottery things with hearts," she stopped abruptly because as they had walked out of the barn 6 or 7 grasshoppers had taken flight right in front of them. "I thought these would be gone by now." Using her free hand, she picked up one that had landed on her leg and carefully put it in her pocket.

She was about to start walking again, but Dad didn't move. She looked over and he was just staring at her with an amused expression on his face. "What?" she asked, "It's for the chickens!"

Dad just chuckled and shook his head. They started moving towards the house. Michelle couldn't wait to show her other sisters, 7-year-old Adee and the just turned 2-year-old Faith the little heart she'd made in the class.

## Chapter 2 - Preparations for a feast!

The next few days were very busy as the family prepared for all the people that were coming to their home for Thanksgiving. Christmas was always more of a private family time, but Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving the girls liked best of all because their home would be full to overflowing with some family and a lot of friends.

The day before Thanksgiving Rosie went back and forth between helping Mom in the kitchen, and helping Dad get the outside area ready. This year, despite their

new home having a large dining area, they had invited so many people that there wasn't room inside the house for everyone to eat!

Adee had been assigned stirring duty as the cranberries bubbled on the stove. Making homemade cranberry sauce wasn't hard, but if someone didn't keep stirring it could burn on the bottom of the pan. As she stood stirring, Adee watched out the window. Dad was back. He and two young guys from the church had gone to pick up some tables that someone had loaned Dad.

Rosie and Dad had spent yesterday clearing branches from a pretty area under several pine trees. The chairs Dad had also borrowed had been picked up and were leaning against the trees, just waiting for the tables.

Looking over Adee's shoulder Mom announced, "Freezer test time!" Adee watched Mom pull a spoon out of the freezer. Using the stirring spoon, she poured a small amount of the cranberry sauce over the ice-cold spoon. "Would you like to do the honors?" Mom asked Adee.

Adee grinned and ran her finger through the sauce on the cold spoon. Sure enough, the sauce had jelled enough that as she ran her finger through it the path her finger took stayed visible, and the sauce didn't fill in the gap.

The number one reason to appreciate the honor of being the official "Tester" was the fact that now she got to lick the yummy tart but sweet sauce off her finger. "It's perfect" she told Mom. "Though, it's a shame it couldn't be yellow."

"Yellow?" Mom said in surprise, "Why would cranberry sauce be yellow?"

"It's my favorite color! Wouldn't it be neat if all your favorite foods were your favorite color?"

"Well, it'd certainly be something. But I think I'm glad it doesn't work that way, or your dad would have us eating a lot of blue foods!" She chuckled. "Anyway!" Mom continued "One more thing to mark off the checklist!" And as if to prove her words, she immediately turned and grabbed her pen and the notebook she'd been making notes in all day long. "It's the only way I can keep

track of all the little things," she'd told the girls earlier that morning. "And usually, it's the little things that people remember as the best things."

Just then, Michelle, Rosie and Grandma Becky entered the kitchen. Rosie and Michelle were laughing, while Grandma Becky looked disgusted and very put out.

"What's going on?" Mom asked.

The girls couldn't stop laughing long enough to answer. Finally, Grandma Becky burst out, "Those crazy, foolish, pesky hens you keep! They don't know what's good for them, OR their baby chicks!" This only made Rosie and Michelle laugh all the louder.

"You girls!" Grandma Becky exclaimed, shaking her head at them. "You might not find it so funny if YOU were being held hostage in YOUR home!" The girls knew she was unhappy about the situation, but grateful she wasn't actually mad at them for laughing. It had been so funny.



Between both Rosie and Michelle's efforts they finally told - and acted out - the story of how one of the hens had gone broody and was trying to hatch some chicks in the small bushy area near Grandma Becky's front door.

Every time Grandma had tried to come out her door, the hen had fluffed up her feathers, made a hissing sound and jumped out at her. Grandma Becky had kept dashing back inside the house until the girls had arrived and held down the fussy hen until Grandma could get out.

"Yes, yes, it's so funny. But are you going to come let me out of my house each time until she hatches those chicks?" Grandma said, eyebrows raised.

The girls just grinned at her. "Oh you!" Grandma said shaking her head smiling. "Perhaps we should have some chicken for Thanksgiving instead of turkey, you think?"

Mom laughed then, "I'm afraid we'll have to consider that for some other year. We're so close to having all the cooking preparations done, I'm not starting over

with chickens! How about we get a cage for the chicken and maybe we could persuade her to live in the barn. Surely, we can negotiate a new living arrangement with the ornery hen."

"No, no. That's not necessary. Leave that hen and her babies where they are. I'll just use my back door." Grandma protested.

"Your back door?" Rosie said questioningly, "Then why didn't you just use..." at a quick look from Grandma Becky, Rosie cut off her question. It didn't stop her wondering why Grandma hadn't used the other door in the first place, but she knew she needed to keep that question to herself... she just didn't know *why*.

Mom had been grabbing some glass mason jars to put her hot jelled cranberry sauce in as she listened to Grandma Becky and the girls. She figured she could guess why the back door wasn't an option. Since Grandma Becky didn't have a lot of closet space, that back entrance was the best place to hide presents. And it was nearing the season! She shook her head and offered

Grandma Becky a ladle. “Care to fill these jars for me?” she asked.

Grandma Becky took the ladle while Rosie and Michelle were assigned the job of dicing up onion and celery for the dressing. The dressing wouldn’t be made until tomorrow, but getting all the ingredients together so it could be made more quickly the next day would be a big help.

Adee began the fun job of crumbling up some cornbread Mom had made earlier and left out to cool. She’d measure out a certain number of cups to store in an airtight bag so tomorrow all Mom would have to do is add seasonings, stir and cook.

Rosie had just finished peeling some hard-boiled eggs when Grandma Becky came back through the door with her crockpot. Dad followed her with a large bowl with rolls.



“What’s that Grandma?” Rosie asked.

“My chicken and dumplin’s,” Grandma Becky answered. “I started these early this morning since I knew we wouldn’t have time to be cooking our supper today.”

“Thank goodness!” Adee exclaimed, “I was starting to think we’d have to wait till Thanksgiving to finally get to eat. I’m starving!”

“Right?” Michelle agreed earnestly, “And smelling all this food cooking... man, it just made me hungrier and hungrier!”

Mom laughed, “I’m sorry we worked you so hard girls, but never fear, we *did* plan to feed you!”

Grandma Becky shook her head, “You did the same thing when you were their age. I’d be going along just fine and turn around and suddenly you’re just absolutely starving. Even if you just ate a snack 15 minutes earlier. You can never underestimate a child’s hollow leg just taking in piles of food.” Grandma Becky wagged her finger laughingly at Michelle and Adee and snatched two rolls from the

bowl Dad carried past her. "There you go! Don't say I never gave you anything," she gave them a smile and tossed the rolls to the two girls.

"AHH AHH!" Grandma exclaimed as both Adee and Michelle had opened their mouths to say "Thank you!" while their mouths were still full of roll. "Hasn't anyone every taught you that you should *say* your thanks, not *spray* your thanks?"

Adee and Michelle looked confused. "What's that mean Grandma?"

Raising her eyebrows she gave them a stern look, "It means, don't talk with your mouth full!" She bobbled her eyebrows at them to let them know she was serious, but not *too* serious.

Rosie, who'd been looking on burst out laughing. "Say it, don't spray it! I'm gonna remember that one and use it all the time!"

Michelle and Adee, covered their mouths with their hands as they tried not to laugh and spray their bites of roll out everywhere. Adee managed a huge gulp then said, "Thanks Grandma Becky!" All

eyes then turned to look at Michelle chewing furiously. She still had one hand over her mouth and the other she used to hold a finger up, motioning everyone to wait just a moment.

It seemed to take Michelle forever to chew her bite, Grandma finally said impatiently, "If you don't hurry up, your momma may just have the baby right here in the kitchen while we're all waiting on you to finally swallow!"

Everyone laughed, Mom the hardest. "I wish! But it'll be nearly 2 full months more." She paused and took a side glance at Michelle who was finally swallowing the last of the bite of roll she'd been working on. "And surely, Michelle will finish that bite before then!"