BETHANY

Bethany was born in London. Daddy was a doctor and Mummy stayed at home to look after her. Mummy had a piano and sang nursery rhymes on it to amuse baby Bethany. She was surprised to find one day that Bethany, now twenty months old, could sing all the nursery rhymes she had played. She was even more surprised, or should she say amazed, when Bethany was three and clambered on to the piano stool and played Mozart's Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. "Can you play anything else?" she asked. "Lots!" replied Bethany and proceeded to play Beethoven's *Fur Elize*. Mummy loved classical piano music and used to listen to it for hours as she did all her housekeeping chores. When Daddy came home, she said to him, "Peter, Bethany would like to show you something." Bethany was only too delighted to oblige. Peter, who had been standing, sank into an armchair and asked, "What now?" "Did you like it, Daddy?" demanded Bethany. "Mummy clapped when I played!" After supper, Daddy said to Bethany, "Please play some more for us? We will clap you lots!" Bethany, delighted, clambered on to the piano stool. There was much clapping. Her repertoire was extensive, and she didn't want to go to bed. It was her first concert.

Daddy and Mummy were not sure what to do about Bethany's musical and normal school education. Fortunately, one of their friends was a violinist in the city's orchestra. "Bethany will need a music teacher," he told them. "But she already knows everything!" objected Mummy. "As she grows, she will need to develop her technique, - this is standard practise for child prodigies" he told Mummy and Daddy. "I will ask our conductor to recommend someone." He recommended Miss Campbel who, unfortunately, lived in another city about forty miles away. Mummy drove her there twice a week as Daddy was at work. They decided that Mummy would teach Bethany how to read, write and do arithmetic,

and they would find friends of the same age who spoke French and German. It was a plan that worked very well, and Bethany soon spoke three languages fluently. She was a bright little girl, and easily mastered the three R's – Reading, Righting and Rithmatic.

On her fourth birthday, Bethany made her musical debut in London. Mummy took her to a famous dressmaker who made a beautiful full-length dress in blue silk with a gold waistband ending in a large bow at the back. "I'm a princess!" Bethany shouted, gazing at herself in the mirror. And so, she was after playing several of her favourite pieces to thunderous applause. She curtseyed and accepted bouquets of flowers from Mummy and from Daddy and walked calmly off the stage like an accomplished performer. The next morning, there were pictures of her in all the local newspapers, and soon Daddy was engulfed in requests for Bethany to perform all over the world. Travelling the world with her parents, Bethany visited many countries and after tours there, they always stayed for a month's holiday. She got to walk on the Great Wall of China, to visit Mount Rushmore in America with its huge heads of four Presidents of the United States of America carved into the top of it, of where she performed at the Carnegie Hall and to the President of the USA and his guests, where she saw the Victoria Falls on a trip to Zimbabwe, and many other places. She kept notebooks and filled them with photographs and press cuttings of her performances, and she never needed to have geography or history lessons. At twelve years old, she found she could compose music. Scores, ranging from small pieces to great concertos, came into her head and she played them effortlessly. Her piano turned them into music which Daddy printed and sold online. Bethany was soon a wealthy young lady.

It was not, however, all work and no play. Bethany had grown into a beautiful young woman with long blonde hair, big blue eyes and a slim but curvaceous figure. When she was at home, she went to parties in her friends' houses and soon found she had many admirers, but at thirty-six years old she was still single, and Daddy and Mummy had long given up any idea of grandchildren, and when Bethany had become conscious of a big void in her innermost being. And then she met Paul, a well-known author of romances. Tall, handsome, brown-eyed and surprisingly single. It was love at first sight and they began dating. To Paul's dismay, he found that Bethany had no interest in going to church with him. He was a member of All Souls, Langham Place, of which John Stott was the Rector. Paul had been praying earnestly for a Christian wife and could not believe that he had fallen madly in love with Bethany. "Bethany," he said to her, "I'm so very sorry to tell you I am breaking up with you." She burst out sobbing and clung to him, "Don't do this to me!" she cried. "The Bible teaches us that we should not be yoked to unbelievers. Here is a book written by my minister." And he handed her a copy of BASIC CHRISTIANITY. Bethany read it and re-read it. It was very clear and logical but left her completely unmoved.

One day, the unbelievable happened. Mummy fainted and could not be revived although she was still alive. The specialists had tried everything to no avail. Daddy had given up hope and sat at Mummy's beside holding her hand. Bethany was distraught. "Paul!" she cried over her cell, "Come quickly! Mummy is dying!" When Paul arrived, he knelt at the bedside, took Mummy's hand in his, and prayed, "Dear Heavenly Father God. Please bring glory to your holy name and heal Mummy. I ask it in the name of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen." And a miracle happened. Mummy opened her eyes. But a greater miracle happened as Bethany lifted a radiant face to Paul and said, "The empty void I

have felt so long has gone and the peace that only Jesus can fill has come into my heart.”