

“Never Give Up”

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Introduction:

You were only asking for a little affection, an arm around your shoulders, and the security of a stable home. You begged for attention, but it never came. You were lonely, but they didn't see it at all.

All these feelings had lurked behind the scenes for as long as you could remember. You weren't the easiest to get along with, and you learned to know the dark side of life. And you almost drowned. Almost. But, although not entirely unscathed, you finally came out of it all.

The blows that you took threw you off balance, but even so, you remained a very likeable person, unmarred by bitterness or hate. Your God showed up at just the right time and took you by the hand. You felt His love, His arm around your shoulders and the security of His home- His hands around your heart. This book was written to introduce you to the beautiful side of a person, but also to the dark side. As you read these pages, you will get to know him, his faith in life and the power of always believing in one's self, even during those moments of doubt. That person's name is Andreas Gieswinkel

Someone who loves him very much.

Rie van Jos

This book has become a reality through the creative inspiration and input from the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ. Son of the Lord our God. The account in this book is based on a true story. The names in this book are fictitious.

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The Beginning

It was November 27, 1972 in Krefeld, Germany. Outside it was very cold. The first snowflakes were falling, and the streets were quiet. And then, close by the hospital, a faint cry was heard. There, in the quiet of a hospital room a child was born, and was given the name Andreas. A nurse gently placed me in my mother's arms, and there I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up I looked around me and saw no one. I wanted some attention, so right away I started crying. There was the nurse already coming into the room. She picked me up, rocked me in her arms, gave me a bottle and put me back in my crib.

So everything went as expected. After a few days, I could go home with my mother. Hey, Yippee!! I'm going home! I finally get to see where I live! It all went by so fast. Of course, if it had taken a little longer, it would have cost more, and nothing should ever cost too much you know. In those hurried first days, there was much that was never written down. The day on which I was born, how much I weighed, my length, etc. Why were there no records kept? Was I not important? Didn't I matter? Why was there no baby book? But of course they will remember it all. Mamma was so good. She'll take me home very soon. There I can crawl around and play. There I will see Mamma all the time, for there we can play a lot!

I was getting older, growing up in Krefeld. I often built sand castles outside in the sandbox, and played with the girls in the neighborhood. I also saw that the girls often got presents from that nice lady next door. But it was only the girls who got something. She only called me a name once in a while. And then she would start to laugh. I stood in front of her window, and called her name, but there was no reaction. Then my mother would always call me back into the house. I only had two sisters, so that is very familiar to me.

Each day I would go to Kindergarten and in the afternoon I had to take a nap. Do I have to do this every day? How I hated that routine. You're put in a bed, and the light goes out. Everything is still. And then everything goes dark. As if I'm not allowed to see the sun through the curtains. You're not even allowed to look around you. I don't want to sleep! I scream and cry, but to no avail. I have to, and I will, go to sleep in the end. Just wait until I get a little older, then I'll make you take an afternoon nap. But then when it's time for recess, and we can all go out and play.

After classes were over I would go with my sister Angelina to play nearby the school. There's a cornfield where it was great fun to run between the plants. Between the very tall plants. You can't see exactly where you are. The thrill of the unknown. The adrenalin which pumps through your body. Once in a while being able to see the sky. Listening intently for my sister. Where was she exactly? Hearing her call for me. Answering her, but being unable to find each other right away. What a great feeling! The suddenly my sister saw a dog. "Look!" she called, "Let's try and catch him!" But I had sandals on and it was hard for me to run. So I thought it would be better to take them off. So I pulled off my sandals, and Angelina saw it. "Don't forget where you leave them!" she barked. I looked at her angrily and thought, "What is she on about? I can't run in these things!" "I'll put them down near the corncob hanging near the ground!" I called back. I took off my sandals and ran after the dog, but of course we couldn't see him at all after only a few yards. I looked at Angelina and she looked back at me. "Let's go back!" she said. "We have to be back in time for supper." We ran back to the place where we started, but where had I left my sandals? I looked around, but they were nowhere to be seen. And where was Angelina?? Then I saw my mother Liset. She didn't look happy at all. Oh, and there was Angelina! Were they

coming to help me look for my sandals? Mamma was really angry so I had to walk home in my socks. On the way she pushed me roughly ahead. "Hurry up, keep going!" she snapped. As punishment I had to go to bed without any dinner and walk to school the next morning in my slippers. Those were the only other shoes I had. At school they all laughed at me. What was I supposed to do? I went to the teacher and told her. "It's your own fault," she said, "but you'll get new shoes from your mother." I hoped I would get new shoes from Mamma when I got home after school.

Hmm, we were not all that rich; I think these shoes used to belong to my older sister Petra. They felt a bit big, but I can walk in them pretty well, and it was only for a short time. Now I felt more important. So I'm wearing my older sister's shoes. After a short time my sandals and punishment were soon forgotten. And then my sister's shoes began to feel better. All proud of myself, I walked to school the next day in my sister's shoes. I even showed them to my teacher. But she didn't really react right away. I was getting the impression that they didn't look so good on me. She would probably call Mamma. What's wrong with these shoes? I didn't really like her reaction. I began to feel ashamed with how I walked. When the time came to go out and play, I would crawl off into a corner. I didn't want to see anyone. Just leave me alone. I'm wearing ugly shoes. They're not nice and they're not cool at all. I felt a deep shame, and I wanted to take them off, but I knew I couldn't because Mamma would get mad at me again. So I kept them on, but I hid them wherever I could, far under the seat where no one could see them.

The time had come, I'm finally four years old. I was allowed to go with my Papa, Jozef, to the bar. I was so looking forward to it, and waited impatiently until I can go there with Papa. On the way, I could sit on Papa's shoulders. Look everyone! This is my Papa! I'm going

with him to the bar! As I was walking, I was laughing and talking Papa's ears off. What does that mean anyway? You can't just get rid of your ears. Or can you? Will Papa then not listen to me anymore? Mamma says that she doesn't like this. The bar is no place for a little boy like me. There's nothing for me there. But Papa went there pretty often. And whenever Papa went there, he always smelled funny afterward. When we walked in, Papa asked me, "What will you have to drink?" I look around me and see all these strange men looking at me. Then they started laughing under their breath so they didn't think I could hear. I didn't feel comfortable at all, but what difference did it make? I was with my Papa. I look at him and shrugged my shoulders. "How would you like to try your first beer?" he asked. I nodded and think, "Oooo that's cool!" If Papa drinks beer, then I wanted to drink beer too. I picked up the glass and started in just like Papa. Hmm, It tasted rather bitter, but it wasn't too bad...if I can finish it, which seemed to take a long time. It was a big glass! When I looked at the glass, I thought to myself, "How am I ever going to finish this?" But when I finally did finish it, it was time to go. When we got home, Mamma was waiting for us. I ran up to her, wanting to tell her about my adventure, but she didn't want to listen. She walked straight past me toward Papa. I wanted to tell Mamma my story and called after her, "Mamma!" But she didn't hear me. I knew that if I pulled on her skirts, she would always look at me and listen, but this time she didn't react to even that. Why doesn't Mamma listen to me? She sees Papa often enough doesn't she? I don't see Mamma so much; I have to go to that stupid school where they laugh at me about my shoes. Of course they didn't get it, that these shoes were my sister's. I think they were a little jealous of my shoes. But now I want to tell Mamma something. "The bar was so much fun! I had my first beer! It was really good Mamma, and I could sit with the other men! Was really nice Mamma!"

But all too soon they were fighting yet again; it seemed that they argued more often these days. Then I would always wonder whether

they were fighting because of me. I really didn't like this. Why are they so mean to each other? Did I do something wrong again? I had to go to my room and could come down to supper when the little hand on the clock was just past the 6. After that I had to go straight to bed. See? I was getting punished again. What did I do wrong? I was just doing the same thing Papa did? That's OK isn't it? Why then was I being punished? I don't want to go to bed yet! I still want to be with Mamma and Papa. Can't you two just be nice to each other? That same night Papa left and didn't come back. He stayed away a few days and when he came home I was sitting on the red armchair in the living room, but Mamma sent me straight up to my room. Again I'm being punished. Papa was finally back, and then I had to leave. I just want to play with Papa for a while.

And then I had to go to bed. But I couldn't sleep because I could hear them arguing again. I tiptoed out of bed and looked at them through a crack in the door. This time it got really bad. Why is Mamma so angry? Then I hear Papa hitting Mamma. I wanted to go in, but then Petra came in. She tucked me in and told me to stay in bed. I don't want this. I wanted to go in and help. I was crying, but Petra said I had to stay in bed. But again I walked quietly to the door, but I don't really want to talk about what happened next. Petra was on the telephone and Papa and Mamma were still fighting. Petra came back; in the meantime Angelina had come into my room. Angelina and Petra were both crying. Then the doorbell rang. Petra opened the door and the police walk in. Did Petra call the cops? Why did she do that?? I didn't understand any of this. What is going on?? The police take Papa away and the atmosphere in the house is very tense. I was sent to bed and now I really had to go to sleep. I was lying awake and I can still see the scene in front of me, of Papa being taken away. I cannot put that picture out of my mind. My Papa in handcuffs with a policeman on each side. What did Papa do wrong??

It was very late when I finally fell asleep crying, after having my first nightmare of my Papa being dragged out of the house. The next morning when I got up, I didn't have to go to school. I could stay home the whole day and play. But I was looking around me to see what was happening. To find out what the problem was. The atmosphere in the house still felt strange and oppressive. And where was Mamma? I hadn't seen her all morning! When I started looking for Mamma, I could go no further than the hall. There was Petra, who picked me up and took me out for a walk. Early that evening we had a visitor. It was a strange woman called Hennie. I had to get in a car with a strange man and we drove that night away from the house. I looked behind me, and somehow I knew that I would never come back here again.



Venlo

When I woke up I was lying in a strange bed. I didn't know this bed; where was I? I walked into the living room and noticed that we were with people I did not know at all. They were all so strange, and were talking in a language I could not understand. What were they all saying? I sat still on the couch and said nothing. I waited for something to happen, but it all took so long. Are we going to do something? Then I went over to Mamma to ask her if I could go out and play. "But don't go far!" she said. What did she mean by that? I went to the front door and looked around me. Hey, there was that strange man again. He took me by the hand and walked outside with me. Wow, he had big hands! And he talked in a funny way. When I got outside, I pulled my hand loose and ran ahead on the path. When I got to the street, I realized I did not know this street. I look around me once more and I didn't know where to go, but I couldn't go back inside, because I would have to sit on the couch again. And the seat was so hard! That's not nice, to sit still with all these big people and have to listen to a language I can't understand. I started down toward the end of the street and walked around the corner. And then another corner, and another and then another and then I turned around. Hey, where was I anyway? I wanted to cry, but then thought that maybe Mamma would get mad again. So I begin walking back in the direction I had come from. Then I came to a corner. But which way should I go? I couldn't remember anymore. I started to run and all these strange people were calling out to me. But what are they all saying? Can't they just speak German? I was crying inside, because I wanted to go to Papa and Mamma, but I didn't know where they were. Then I saw that strange man in the distance coming toward me. He ran toward me and grabbed me by the arms. Eeeyuk, he really stank, that man! He didn't have the same smell about him that Mamma and Papa had. So we went inside again. It seemed that we were now in Amersfoort. I got a little breakfast and ate my sandwiches nicely. But I couldn't go outside and play anymore. Where were we anyway, that I

can't even go outside to play? I didn't like this at all. This is very scary.

Later that day, we got in the car and drove around for a while. We entered another street that I didn't know and walked into a big house. There was a big living room and Mamma had to work. Why does Mamma have to work? Can somebody explain this to me? Who wants to play with me? Why was nobody listening to me? What am I supposed to do here the whole day? I don't understand any of this!!

It went like this for a whole week and then we got our first visitors. It was a family from Germany. Oh yes, I knew this man; he is my godparent Peter. He was a nice uncle. He drove a big truck. He had a beautiful truck with all kinds of flags on the front. He promised me one time that I could go for a ride with him. I was already looking forward to it. My Uncle Otto and Hans, the godparent of Angelina came for a visit once in a while. It was always nice when they came; they were from Germany and they always brought presents and yummy pie with them. Then we all had lots to eat! But they also talk a lot and then I had to be nice and I wasn't allowed to play with my toy cars. But Peter was really nice. I always got the best presents from him. Often he brought me new cars and once he even brought me a doll. What was I supposed to do with a doll? Didn't he know that I'm a boy? I'm not a girl. But it was my uncle who gave me that doll, so that doll was special.

He always listened to me and I could always sit in his lap. At least he gave me some attention. And when he had some time, he even played with me. He let me do a lot more than Mamma did. It was never nice when he had to leave. I always stood by the door and waved until I couldn't see him anymore. Only then did I turn around and go back inside.

Then came the day when I went to school for the first time in the Netherlands. But there was one thing I didn't understand. When Petra and Angelina first went to school they both got a big beautiful pointed cap full of sweets and school things, and a *schoolbag*. Why didn't I get these things? I had to be in a place where I didn't know anyone and couldn't understand what people were saying. What was I supposed to do here? Did I have to stay here the whole day? The teacher said I had to speak Dutch, but what does that mean? There's no way I can do this. What were they babbling about anyway? Was I supposed to understand this? Can't this woman just speak normal German? Hey, I think she's getting mad, her face is starting to turn red. And now she's leaving the classroom. Wait! Don't go! I walked quickly behind her to catch up, I didn't want to be left behind here with all these strange children. Where did she go? I walked into the hall, and saw the jackets hanging on the rack on the right. Hey! I can see my jacket hanging there too. The hall was so BIG! Where should I go? Is there nobody at all nearby? It is so quiet here. So cold. Ahh, there, on the left, the bathroom. That I knew well. Had to know where that bathroom was, it was an easy place to remember. A little way farther down on the left was a doorway. I thought I could hear her talking. I looked over that way, and heard the children behind me yelling and calling out, but I couldn't understand anything they were saying. They kept calling and calling, but I didn't understand a single word. Then I heard her coming through that doorway. Look, there she was; she took me by the hand and we went back into the classroom. She put me on a mat in the corner. Yippee! Now I could play with all the toys! All just for me. The other kids had to sit in a circle, while I got to play with all the toys. This I really liked! After playing for a little while, I saw Mamma coming into the room. She had that strange look in her eye again. That look which meant something unpleasant was not far away. She started walking toward me; are we going home now? That's fine, away from here; to be honest, I had already had enough of this place thank you. But what was she saying now? She smacked me upside the head. Because I don't want to speak Dutch? Do I really have to learn this

language? I didn't like that idea at all; I didn't understand anything about Dutch and it was far too difficult. But I was not about to give up. I didn't want to make things any harder for Mamma. She had enough problems already.

We didn't see Papa anymore, so I was the only man in the house. I had to grow up fast, to support Mamma and help her. I had to do my very best to grow up big and strong. OK, I decided I'll learn Dutch; I was young so I could learn pretty fast. In only a short time I could get along in Dutch pretty well. I began to get more appreciation for a little while. But Mamma was working a lot now, so I spent a lot of time with my sisters.

I was getting into a lot of arguments with Petra, because I couldn't get my own way. One day I was playing marbles in the living room; Petra was in the dining room. I picked up one of my big shooters, and threw it her. She was smarter than I was, though, and quickly closed the door between us. I threw it so hard that it hit the window and stayed stuck there. I think you can imagine what happened when my mother got home. The house was far too small. I was sent up to bed without any supper. Mind you, we didn't always eat so well; sometimes we had only rice and cinnamon with sugar for supper. Or else we would have warm pudding; we called it hot pudding soup.

Every day, I would walk with Angelina to school. And every day, when school was out, I had to wait for her until she came out of her classroom. Then we would both go home together. But it always took so long. She was always playing with her friends. And I had to sit there and wait. Oh, now I see one of my friends! I'll just walk home with him. We would walk along the same route we always took. Across the sidewalk, than alongside the walls, past the yard with the WC in the front garden. Look! there's the candy store already! Mamma had never allowed me to go in there, because we didn't have enough money. We had to save as much as we could, and spend our

money wisely. Therefore we always go to the Aldi. Things didn't cost so much, and Mamma could buy her cigarettes there as well. When I got home, Mamma was already outside waiting for me. She was worried, since Angelina couldn't find me and had asked the teacher to call Mamma. Mamma wrapped her arms around me and gave me a big hug. Oh! That was wonderful! Couldn't we do that more often? I was so happy to be home again. A little while later Angelina arrived and came inside. She got a sharp reprimand from Mamma, because she hadn't looked after me very well. They got into a huge argument, and Angelina stomped upstairs in anger. Wow, what was that all about? I went upstairs to comfort Angelina, but she kicked me out of her room. "It's not fair!" she screamed. What was she on about? I tried again to comfort her. I didn't want to hurt her, but I had to wait so long for her! She took so long with her friends! When I went downstairs, I had to go to Mamma. She wanted to talk to me. About important things. I liked that since I was the only man in the house. She told me that now in the morning I was to walk to school with Angelina, but that I could walk home alone or with a friend after school was over. That was nice to hear! I was fast becoming a man. I could go home alone, without Angelina. The next day, Angelina was still mad at me. I walked quickly to catch up with her. She walked very fast and didn't want to wait. "Don't go so fast!" I called, but she wouldn't listen. Only at the crossing would she stop and wait so we could cross the street together. When school was out, I didn't have to wait for her. That was nice! I always ran as fast as I could, to finally be at home.

One day I found a 1-guilder coin on the street. I quickly picked it up, and examined the coin very carefully. I had never had 1 guilder in my hand before. How beautiful it was! I held on to that coin very tightly and didn't ever want to part with it. This was my first guilder! All just for me. I could do with it whatever I wanted. I walked faster toward home, but then I saw the candy store.

.....I stopped and looked at the candy store, then at the guilder coin, and then back at the candy store. I glanced quickly first to my left and then to the right, and then ran across the street. Then I was standing in front of the window. I looked through the window inside, and saw the man standing behind the counter. And then I looked at all that candy! I could see all the sweet ones and some sour ones. Red, green, blue, and some with funny shapes. And the licorice strings! Can you really eat those?? That's strange. My mouth started watering looking at all that candy. But what would that man think, seeing me standing there by the window? Would he know that I had found a 1-guilder coin? Would he tell Mamma?? If I go in and buy some candy, Mamma mustn't ever find out. I didn't think she would like it. For we had to put that guilder to good use, but I didn't get to have candy very often; and now I had my chance! So I stood standing in front of the window, trying to think of a solution. But I couldn't think of anything. Then I took a deep breath and went inside. I walked to the front counter; the man turned and looked down at me over the counter. "So young man, what can I do for you? Would you like to buy some candy?" How did this man know that I wanted to buy some candy? Did he know me? I didn't know what else to say, and I held up my guilder coin for him to see. The man started to laugh and took the coin from my hand. "You show me which candies you would like to have, OK? You may choose ten." Ten candies! That's a lot! Ten candies for one guilder? I didn't even know If I could eat all ten. Feeling a little shy, I pointed out the ones I wanted. The green one, the blue one and that red one. And this one, this one, and that one over there! When I had chosen ten, the man put them all in a little bag and gave it to me. I slowly opened the top of the bag, and stared down at all that candy. Wow, they looked so good! Then I looked at the man one last time and ran out of the store. To get home. I was hoping that Mamma had not missed me. I didn't know if she would be there yet. I put the bag of candy in my jacket pocket and ran quickly toward home.

When I finally arrived at the house, it was soon clear that Mamma wasn't home yet. Or had she already been home, and was now out looking for me? I rang the bell a few times, but no one opened the door. I shook the mailbox a little, trying to make some noise, but there was no reaction. Then I realized, I really had to go to the bathroom. Is there no one there who can let me in? I look around me, but I didn't see anyone that I knew. I walked back and forth, but no one comes. I really HAVE to use the toilet, but the door is shut. Where do I go now? I couldn't cross the street, because Mamma wouldn't let me. Again I rang the bell, but Mamma wasn't home. No one opened the door. And where was Angelina? She would answer the door wouldn't she? Well, then I just had to do it on the sidewalk. "It's our sidewalk," Mamma always said. We have to keep the sidewalk clean, but I had to go so badly! I squatted down next to the door and finished as fast as I could. No one could see me. Just when I had finished, and pulled up my pants, around the corner came Mamma. Just in time! I ran quickly inside and up to the bathroom to clean myself. Then I heard Mamma, "Did you go to the bathroom by the door?" she asked. How did she know?? She couldn't have seen it when I went in the house with her? I try to look at her as innocently as I could, and said, "No I didn't." But Mamma already knew. The neighbor had seen me by the door, and had told Mamma. What a strange neighbor! How could she have possibly seen me?? I had squatted down next to the wall. I had to fix the mess next to the door; how that was to be done was my problem. I took a pail, a sponge and a trowel, and went outside to clean it up. While working, I noticed people giving me funny looks. What is their problem anyway?? Don't they ever have to go to the bathroom? Am I the only one who has to do this? When I finished and went inside, I could see that Angelina and Petra were already home; they looked at me and began whispering to each other and laughing. That wasn't very nice! Then we all sat down the table to eat. Afterward I had to wash the dishes by myself as punishment. That's not fair! I come home, there is no one to let me in, I have to go to the bathroom, but I can't! And if I go in my pants instead of holding it in, I still get punished.

This isn't fair. After washing the dishes, I ran up the stairs to my room. There I hid my bag of candy under my mattress. No one could know that I had it. It was for me alone. And later when I had to go to bed, and the light was out, I ate a few. When the candy was all gone, I still had to throw the bag away. I decided to drop it out the window onto the neighbor's roof.

The next day when I woke up, I realized it was Saturday, and I didn't have to go to school. Wonderful! A whole day off! I quickly ran downstairs, and went onto the roof terrace. We shared this house with that woman Hennie and her son, Marco. And that kid was so cool! He could do anything he wanted! He smoked and didn't go to school. He stayed home the whole day and watched TV, or would sit on the roof terrace playing on a little computer. He was about as old as Petra. She did whatever she wanted too. Must be so nice to have such freedom. But I wasn't allowed to go with them. "They aren't always so nice," said Mamma. But I didn't get this at all. They seemed to be nice enough. They would tell jokes all day. And then they always laughed really hard. I took a look around the roof terrace. I was never allowed to go there, because it could be dangerous. The roof terrace was the roof of a small business under us. The house we rented was an upstairs flat in Venlo. In the middle of the roof terrace was a was a big glass tent. If you looked down through the window, you had a good view of the men working. There were tiny little stones everywhere; they made a strange sound when you walked on them. And I walked on them too sometimes. Then I saw the paper bag from the candy store. I looked quickly around to make sure nobody could see me. But as far as I knew, everyone was still asleep, except for that kid Marco. I scooped up the paper bag, and then heard behind me, "Leave that trash there, it's not ours anyway." So Marco had been spying on me. I walked quickly inside with the paper bag in my pocket. I felt so ashamed. Maybe he didn't know that I had thrown it there? But what if he DID know? What then? Would he go and tell Mamma? I decided to throw the bag out the front window. Then it would blow away and no one

would be the wiser. Anybody could have thrown it away. I opened the window and looked outside. Wow, that was beautiful! Seeing everyone from way up high. You could even see the tops of their heads! Hihihhi, that looked really funny! I threw the paper bag out the window and watched it as it twirled toward the ground. Then suddenly, somebody pulled me roughly from behind away from the window. I was startled, and whipped around to see who had pulled me inside. Oh, it was Mamma, who barked in my ear, "Don't EVER do that again!" "You could have easily fallen out the window! And don't throw things on the street! That's why we have a trash container. And hurry up now, you have to set the table." I stood there for a few seconds to think. Had she seen how I threw away the paper bag? Had she seen that I went out on the roof to get it? I ran into the kitchen and began to get the silverware and other things to set the table.

The rest of the day went by without incident, but I didn't dare say anything. Maybe she already knew about the guilder coin. And maybe the bag of candy too. And then I'll get punished again or put over Mamma's knee. I wasn't in the mood for that at all. I made up my mind to stay in my room and play there. So I played with my cars and the doll I had gotten from Peter. Once in a while I would go and see what Angelina was doing. She had gotten a beautiful dollhouse. She could play all day with it. Sometimes her friends would come to visit and then they would play together. Then she would close the door and I wasn't allowed to disturb her. If I did, she would run angrily into the hall, and then Mamma would come. "Let Angelina play now, stop bothering her!" Mamma would always shout. Then she would box my ears, and drag me by the arm to my room. "Stay in here and play; I don't want to hear from you again!" Mamma was more tired these days; we were not allowed to play with her or make any noise. Then in the early evening, I could watch TV for a little while, just for a short time after supper. Then I had to wash up and get ready for bed. Angelina and Petra were always allowed to stay up later. But I had to

turn my face to the wall and close my eyes, but why?? I wasn't tired at all.

Every once in a while, I would sneak softly out of bed, and sit by the railing in the hall. From there I could hear everything which was happening downstairs. I could hear how they were all having fun, and laughing, watching TV together. Sometimes I could hear them all laughing about me, happy that I was up in my room in bed. I was a burden to them. Much too active and noisy. I craved attention, but it never came. I was always getting into things and interrupting everything. I didn't like hearing these things at all. One night, when I was sitting by the railing and listening, Marco suddenly came upstairs. I had not heard him coming, because he always tiptoed very quietly to his room. I was startled but did not move. Then he saw me and came over to me and just patted my head. "Just stay where you are, I didn't see anything," he whispered. He went to his room and I could hear him listening to the radio. That was very reassuring. He actually liked me. I really liked it when he patted me on the head; but because I was looking so intently at the door to his room, I forgot to watch out for anyone else who might see me. And suddenly, Angelina was there. She called Mamma, and then Mamma came up the stairs. "What are you doing out of bed? You should have been asleep long before now! Now, go to bed!" I ran back into my room, but the damage was already done. Mamma came into my room and slammed the door behind her. She dragged me out of bed and spanked me on my bare bottom. "If you start crying, you'll get even more, now go to sleep!" I waited until the door was closed, and then began to cry softly. I knew if Mamma heard me, I would get spanked again. Still trying to be as quiet as I could, I finally cried myself to sleep.

The next morning, Petra got me out of bed. Petra was always very nice to me. She helped me with getting dressed and brushing my teeth; she would make sure I was downstairs on time. She also saw to it that I looked nice. It was Sunday; on Sundays we always went to church.

Then when we came home, Mamma would roast a chicken on the spit; then we would all eat together. That was always a lot of fun. But I could never spill anything; my clothes always had to be spotless. I would have always worn a bib but since we didn't have a lot of money, I used a dishcloth instead. I spilled quite often, and when I did spill, it was usually a lot. We would chew a chicken leg until the bones were completely clean. But I didn't always want to eat so much; even so, we always had to finish everything on our plates. If I talked too much and didn't eat everything, Mamma would give me a slap on the mouth. That always hurt a lot! When I was finished chewing, I had to put the leftover bone on the big plate in the middle of the table with all the other bones. Every so often, when I was really full, I would sneak some of my food onto the plate in the middle with the other bones. If someone saw me, I would get a slap on the back of my head. That hurt a lot too! And then I wouldn't be allowed to go outside and play for the rest of the day.

And every so often, Uncle Peter and his wife would come and visit in the afternoon. That was always a special time, but I had to really behave myself, since I didn't always finish all my food. Then Uncle Peter would take a short walk with me, and I would hear a long sermon on why Mamma found me so difficult. I tried so hard to do everything right, but the harder I tried, the more I failed. What had I been doing wrong?? I wasn't allowed to talk on these walks and I had to listen the whole time to Uncle Peter. Uncle Peter always told me that he wanted to be a kind of father to me. If something came up, I could always ask him questions or tell him what was on my mind. He was very nice to me, and took the time to listen to me; but he didn't visit us very often. He had a very busy job, and he lived far away. He always spoke German. At least I could understand this language well. And then when we came home, Mamma was also very nice to me.

It was Monday morning, the alarm was ringing and Angelina came in to get me out of bed and get ready for school. Something wasn't quite

right today, I had the feeling something was going to happen. Everything would go as it was supposed to. We would have our breakfast together, and then go quickly to school, but something in me told me that things would go differently today. We got ourselves ready and went off to school. Everything that took place in the weekend was soon forgotten. Or so it seemed. It had been really a very nice weekend. My Uncle Peter had come; he had given me a few new cars, so, all in all, a great weekend. But that was yesterday, now we were in school and lessons were about to begin. When school was over for the day, I waited for Angelina like I always did, but this time she didn't show up. I began to walk home with my friend; on the way we began to play and throw stones at each other. All kinds of little stones. Sometimes they would hit pretty hard, but that wasn't so bad. Of course we tried to dodge them, and most of the time we could avoid getting hit. We were running back and forth and every which way. And then it happened.....One of my friends threw more stones at me; I tried to avoid them; the only thing I could do was run out into the street. We were concentrating on each other and not on what was happening around us. I ran into the street and didn't see the car coming at me. Then the squeal of the brakes, the skidding tires, the crash, and.... too late, there I was with my leg trapped under the car. My lower leg was broken. It hurt soooo much! I'm screaming and crying; the driver comes running from the car, and Angelina as well from a distance. The man comes over to me and tried to comfort me, but it just hurt too much. I'm screaming with pain, and my friend ran toward home. Angelina talked to the driver for a few minutes and then ran home.

When Angelina arrived at the house, Mamma was already home. Angelina ran up the stairs to Mamma who asked, "Whatever is the matter and where is Andreas?" Angelina could hardly get the words out; sobbing and crying, she told Mamma what had happened. Angelina was shocked and scared, "What is going to happen now??" Mamma was upset, and went to the hospital as quickly as she could.

She arrived at the Emergency Room and heard that my lower leg was broken and that the doctors were working on me. She talked for a little while with the ER doctor and then came into my room. She found me with the nurses, and talked with them for a short time. "He'll be alright," they told her. My leg was broken in two places; I got a cast all the way up to just above my knee. I was not allowed to walk and was told to rest. The driver of the car that hit me, drove me home. Mamma was already waiting when I arrived. I was carried upstairs and placed on the couch. I didn't have to go to school the next day! That's nice! Now I was getting the attention I wanted so badly, even though my leg still hurt a lot.

So now I could stay the whole day with Mamma. If Mamma had to leave for a while, she would return with Playmobile. I could play for the whole day and just lie in bed! When I took a shower, Petra would wash me. People listened to me now, and played with me. When was warm outside, we could swim in a little pool. I could sit in the shallow water, but I couldn't allow my cast to get wet. It took about 6 months for my leg to heal, with regular hospital visits with Mamma. After a time I was fitted with a walking cast, so I could get used to walking again. Things were going pretty well really, and I was never bored. I was getting more attention at home, and also at school. Several of the kids at school made a drawing on my cast, and signed their names. It was all so much fun! After the six months, the fun was over and the attention quickly disappeared. It was time for the cast to come off. I wanted to save it, but that wasn't going to happen. I could not take it with me. And then everything went back to the way things had been before.

It was getting to be too much for Mamma. She had sought help, but that didn't work well at all. My sisters and I went to live with a foster family for a while, and Mamma went for a short time to an Easter show. I lived with a family where I got loads of attention and a lot of love. When I could return home, it seemed that things were going