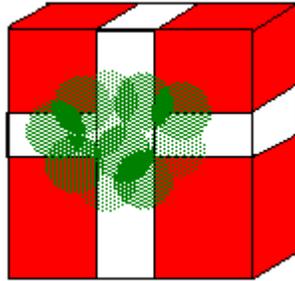


# SPECIAL BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

Special Story for the whole family



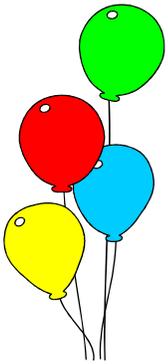
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He hustled through the front door, his arm behind his back. A smile hovered on his lips.

A just-turned five-year-old tornado hurled himself at the tall, well-proportioned man entering the living room. “Dad! Dad, you’re home!”

“Son, hold it.” The man chuckled as he caught his wriggly son with his free arm. His laugh deepened. “Why so excited?”

The boy straightened. He was tall for his age with shock of blond hair. His deep blue eyes widened. “My birthday, dad. It’s my birthday. You didn’t forget?”



He caught his breath. “Me and Mom and Brother and Sissy, we’ve been decorating all,” he flung out his arms, “morning.” A moment later, he tugged his dad’s arm, frowning a bit with impatience. “Dad, come on in. Come see.” He pointed toward balloons dancing against strings tied and taped around the room—red, yellow, blue, purple, white.

“Hurry, dad. I get to decorate my cake. Wanta watch?”

“Of course.” Still the man didn’t move further into the room.

“Dad?” A pleading note sounded in the boy’s tone along with uncertainty. “Why are you standing in the doorway?” He motioned toward the couch. “See. Gramma and Grampa are already here and the ice cream’s going to melt and I wanta decorate my cake and eat and open presents.” He sucked in a deep breath as he pointed to the brightly wrapped gifts piled on an end table.

“Sissy,” he called to his one-year-old sister heading for the table. “NO! Those are MY presents.” He turned toward the kitchen away from the front entrance. “Mom! Stop Sissy.” When his sister suddenly sat on her bottom and crawled away, he glanced back

at his dad. "Come on, Dad."

His father's eyebrows rose as a smile quirked on his lips. "I have a surprise."

The boy's face lit up like a birthday candle. "Surprise? Oh, what is it, Dad? What is it?" He tried to peer behind his father, but his dad held him off.

"Son, what did you want for your birthday?" A sound caused him to clear his throat to cover it.

The boy yelled. "Dad, that wasn't you." He tried to duck under his dad's long legs as he talked. A robbo-robot game, a tanker truck with a ladder that goes up and down and, and a puppy. A real live puppy all my own." His shoulders slumped. "But you always say, 'no pets.'"

"Well, I didn't get you a puppy, Son." The man shook his head, grinned. "But I did bring you something...well, someone." Stepping aside, the man let a young woman slide passed him into the room. She needed no introduction as his son squealed, "Aunt Cassie! My favoritist aunt in the world! You came to my party."

He hesitated. "But you live far away. How did you get here?" Not waiting her answer, he launched himself into her waiting arms. As he knew she would, she caught him up in her famous hug and swung him around.

His aunt, dad's sister, had come back for his party. Somehow, he almost, but not quite missed sight of the box she'd quickly handed to his dad. Once she put him down, she retrieved it and knelt to be face to face with him. "Happy Birthday, Sport."

The box shook as he grasped it. "Careful, Son," his dad cautioned. "Don't drop it."



The boy knelt beside his favorite aunt. Ahh. Two little eyes stared out at him through a hole in the box. "Oh." With his aunt's help, he opened the box and simply stared. It couldn't be. "But, Dad said he wouldn't get me a puppy." He seemed afraid to touch the wriggly bundle of fur as though afraid it might disappear or be taken away.

With a laugh, Aunt Cassie lifted the black and white fur ball from the box. "Because I told my brother, your dad, I was bringing this little one for you." Gently, she placed the squirmy mutt into the boy's waiting arms. The boy's eyes widened in wonder and a giggle escaped when the little dog licked his face. He got all protective when his brother and

sister crowded him. He instructed, “Gotta be nice to him.”

His joy reflected on his face. Holding the puppy close, he glanced around the room at all the smiling, caring adults who’d come to his party. He sounded very grown-up. “I prayed for a puppy and for Aunt Cassie to come to my party. I didn’t think God would really answer, but He did.” He giggled as the puppy snuggled against his chin.

His dad knelt beside him. “Sometimes God says, ‘no’ or ‘wait.’”

The boy nodded. His tone earnest, he said, “But, Daddy, this time I just needed to know He heard.”

Only the Father knows the cry of our hearts, knows the motives of a young boy’s need and answers abundantly because He is living and present and compassionate.

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3*