

THE TRIALS (AND TRIUMPHS) OF YOUNG LUCY TOASTSON

an allegorical hyperbole

by

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At 329 pounds Lucy was without a doubt the largest student in her fifth grade class. This notwithstanding, her graciousness and magnanimity truly made her something of a household name throughout Dafton County and even across county lines over into Flipton and Choogsville.

But before I get into all that, let me take a few steps back and tell you about two or three other interesting facts about Lucy which I think are pertinent to our story. First off, Lucy exhibited a peculiar predilection for Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars. For all intents and purposes they were her *raison d'être* since before she could walk, or even talk, Lucy was nuts about them. She could never get enough of those tiny dye cast automobiles. She would nurture and care for them in the same manner other children might a baby doll or a Barbie. It was quite a spectacle to behold too, that big baby (she weighed almost fifty pounds by the time she got her first tooth) cradling one of her little metal cars. The doctor was put to stirrs over whether or not she was going to put one of them in her mouth and asphyxiate herself but, as far as anyone could tell, she never did wrap her bug pudgy jowls around one, or, if she did, she apparently didn't attempt to swallow it. No, about all she ever did with her favorite toys was kind of nuzzle them.

It came to be that big little Lucy's appetite for Hot wheels bordered on insatiable. It was all her parents could do to provide their precious daughter with her heart's true desire. Through scrupulous economizing, scrimping, and saving they were usually able to procure about one toy car a week.

Now, I'm sure at this point you're thinking: "What's the big deal? How much could a

Hot Wheels car cost every now and then?” And the answer to that reasonable question is, honestly, not very much. This brings us to another aspect of Lucy’s life which plays a pivotal role in the events to follow. I don’t know how else to put it friends, but the sad fact of the matter is that Lucy’s folks were really “on the skids.” That is to say, their house was built out of pallets. You know, like the kind they use to stack boxes on in warehouses. About all they had for a roof was one of those natty blue tarps that some one had picked up for them down at the Wal-mart. They got a few rain coats from the lost and found section at the Trailways station when it closed down. They used these yellow and blue slickers to cover the window and the door during inclement weather. Destitution did not even begin to describe the kind of poverty which Lucy and her family were rapidly growing accustomed to.

To console themselves, Neil and Sandy (that’s Lucy’s parents) would express their gratitude at the fact that, between the two of them, their net weight hovered around ninety pounds, which made living in their dinky lean-to almost bearable. Now don’t get me wrong, things hadn’t always been so rough for Lucy’s family. It was really a recent development that they should find themselves in such *lean* circumstances. Things had been just fine and dandy until some time soon after Lucy’s second birthday, and just before Neil and Sandy’s first wedding anniversary, when Neil contracted his mysterious speech impediment, at which point he found it near to impossible to hold down steady employment. As for Sandy, well, she spent the better part of her waking hours tending to Lucy, the feeding of whom had become nothing short of a full time occupation, or fulfilling her domestic obligations around the trailer, that is, before they lost the trailer.

Neil and Sandy figured another perk of not having to go to some miserable job every day or pay the mortgage on some dilapidated mobile home was that they could singularly devote themselves to showering love and affection on their sublimely angelic, albeit corpulent, daughter. So what ever else you could say about the Toastson clan, there was never a dearth of love in their humble domicile. It was this deep aquifer of emotion that led

Neil and Sandy to lug Lucy around in a shopping cart (they couldn't find a stroller that was quite big enough you see) which they had "borrowed" from the Piggly Wiggly, while they scoured the Flea Markets and tag sales for ... yes, you guessed it, Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars.

And so it came to pass that Lucy amassed quite a sizable collection of Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars which she took meticulous care of. A warm, joyous glow radiated through the slats of the Toastson's house. Nearly everyone though so. As for Neil and Sandy, they figured they were getting on rather well, all things considered. Every day Neil and Sandy made a point to take stock of the simple things and to say a prayer of thanks for their blessings. The only very difficult times, really, were during the dreary winter months when there just weren't as many rummage sales.

On one occasion, when Neil was feeling particularly expansive, he put an addition on to the house, which consisted of one refrigerator box and a window with shutters that opened and closed which he had cut out with his utility knife. It was a wing dedicated solely to his daughters most prized possessions.

In some ways it seemed the sun was only just starting to shine for the Toastsons. Lucy was almost five, and her growth spurts had exceeded everyone's expectations. She was up around 132. The family had settled into a pleasant, comfortable daily routine. But as the summer nights grew longer and chillier, Neil began to feel a persistent, nagging anxiety some where back in the impenetrable catacombs of his consciousness. And though he just couldn't put his finger on it, this uneasy feeling festered within him, and even began to take its toll on his connubial relations. When Sandy tried to press him on the subject, he only became more and more distant and withdrew deeper into his sullen brooding. He just didn't have the words to describe the pressure that was welling up inside of him. Until one day his proverbial house of cards came crashing down.

“I wish you hadn’t knocked so hard.” Neil said in his usual tender and subdued fashion to a man in a plain gray polyester suit who now stood where the front wall had been, and who had just caused the Toastson’s residence to collapse.

The man in the plain gray polyester suit apologized and hastily handed Neil a light blue envelope before he scurried off. The man in the plain gray polyester suit was quite taken aback because of what Neil had said to him.

Now we all know that to say something like: “I wish you hadn’t knocked so hard,” is not a particularly rude or malicious thing to say. Especially when you consider the kind and gentle way it was uttered by Neil, who was highly regarded as a sensitive and considerate man. Unfortunately, what the man in the plain gray polyester suit heard was: “Booger gobbling turd bandit! I hope you choke on your uvula! You gutter belching monkey’s uncle to a well digger’s ass!”

This was, of course, another typical example of Neil’s speech impediment complicating simple matters once again and disrupting the natural exchange of thoughts and ideas: the purpose which language is normally meant to serve.

Neil regarded the envelope with considerable dread. It disturbed him to no end that his first correspondence of any kind in nearly four years should cause his home to fall over, and worst of all, it came in a blue envelope with a plastic window! He was in fact paralyzed with apprehension, and it was only after Sandy forcibly removed the letter from his white knuckled clutches that she was able to make out the inscription. The letter was addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Toastson, and the return address was that of the school board’s. When Neil finally regained his senses after polishing of the remaining few drops of the Slurpie which was left over from dinner, and which, in fact, had *been* the dinner, the entire family sat down to divulge the contents of their mail.

Though Neil had already realized the sad truth, it wasn't until just that moment that he was able to admit it to himself. Suddenly, it was painfully clear that the time had finally come for his daughter to be rent from the safety and security of their home, and to be left adrift on the unfriendly tides of the public education system.

This can be a difficult transitional stage for any family, and though the tight familial bonds would be extremely painful for the Toastson's to loosen, there was a more immediate dilemma which reared its ugly head.

In the absence of a clothing budget, the Toastsons had taken to fashioning clothing out of multi-colored "O-Cell-O" sponges and duct tape, and although Sandy found them quite becoming, and although Neil never ceased to be amazed at what a wonder his little wife was with a needle and thread, both gradually came to the self evident truth that Lucy's voluminous "O-Cell-O" and duct tape dress just wouldn't do for her first day of kindergarten.

The Toastson's were at wit's end.

"We've survived through stronger squalls than this dear," Sandy said to Neil as they lay awake on their hard pallet, staring up at the star splattered August sky. The walls of their hut lay scattered in disarray around them.

"This too shall pass," Neil whispered quietly so as not to wake the child.

Of course, poor Sandy heard: "Smegma pimples fart cheese lard."

Neil squeezed his wife's hand tenderly; somehow they nodded off.

The next day a miracle occurred.

It seemed that the local chapter of the Scientologists caught wind of their plight. Being well versed in enduring persecution themselves, as evidenced by their recent full page ads in the New York Times, they immediately rushed them over a dozen copies of Dianetics and three or four garbage bags full of donated clothing. Lucy of course didn't fit into most of the baby clothes they'd sent but was able to squeeze into most of the outfits which were intended for Sandy. And so it was, only a few days before school started and the Toastsons had a new wardrobe and a new lease on life. Oh yes, I almost forgot, the Scientologists also gave them some new pallets and a new tarp, as well as some blanket and other assorted knick knacks for around the home. Neil was particularly fond of the clock with the gold frame that had a picture of John F. Kennedy on the one side, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the other, and though their house had no electricity what so ever, it didn't make any difference to him. He displayed it prominently in the "Great Room."

As for Lucy, this selfless act of charity would reside prominently in her memory for the remainder of her days.

Unfortunately, the newly recovered domestic tranquility which the Toastson's were enjoying was short lived. The first day of kindergarten was terrible, and the worst was yet to come. Lucy's peers were not the least bit daunted by the fact that she was nearly twice their size and could thump them with alacrity if she were so inclined. No, in fact they took it upon themselves to bombard her with a barrage of ceaseless cruelties, the likes of which only the maniacal mind of a child could devise. For some reason the other children, and even Lucy's teachers just could not see the expansive reservoir of love which Lucy carried in her sizable bosom. For some reason, they could never open themselves up to Lucy's beautiful heart, which was, by far, her most mammoth feature.

If you have ever been a child yourself, you might remember how hard it is to suffer the slings and daggers of your peers with no apparent recourse or avenue of escape. As for

Lucy, it was impossible for her to comprehend. You see, the tortures she endured on a daily basis were all that much more pronounced in contrast to the unmitigated, unconditional love she received in abundance at home. But Lucy never revealed her unhappy sorrows to her parents; her being away from them for four hours a day was hard enough on them.

Lucy took solace in applying herself to her studies. And of course there were her Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars.

Lucy brought her Hot wheels and Matchbox cars to school every week for “Show and Tell.” Seeing as how it would’ve been physically impossible for her to bring them all at once, each week she showed a different sub-group. Monster trucks one week, then maybe “funny” cars the next. But most of all, there was her favorite category: The Dukes of Hazard category. Lucy cornered the market on The Dukes of Hazard model cars. She had Jessie’s baby blue pick up truck which was slightly dented (Neil and Sandy had picked it up at the garage sale of a family with a miniature schnauzer dog who had a propensity to chew on things). Neil was fond of remarking that it added to the truck’s “authenticity.” Lucy also had a white convertible Cadillac, just like the kind Boss Hog drove with the little horns on the front. She had two patrol cars, one for Rosco P. Coltrane and one for his deputy, Enos. She had Cooter’s tow truck, and of course she had the General Lee. It was an immaculate red ‘68 Dodge Charger with a big black stripe running down its entire length and the number “54” painted on each door, which of course didn’t open. But her most sacred, her most cherished collectible was Daisy’s white Jeep with the gold eagle splayed across the hood.

Oh how the kids in her class mocked and ridiculed her. But she turned a deaf ear to their jeers and blithely expounded at length on the particular significance of each item in her extensive horde.

This ritual continued unchanged, season after season and all the while Lucy somehow became more and more rotund despite the fact that the Toastson's could seldom afford to eat anything besides Olive loaf and Chocolate Necco Wafers.

All the while Lucy excelled at every discipline she turned her attentions towards. She was really something of a sensation. You might even go so far as to say that she was a child prodigy. By first grade she could draw perfect circles and could color them in without going out side of the lines. By second grade she was an accomplished reader and writer. By third grade she knew all of her multiplication tables by heart. She even had legible cursive hand writing. Unfortunately, this only gouged a deeper chasm between her and the other students.

It was partially for this reason that the school's guidance counselor, "Tupper" Madcock, and Lucy's teacher, Eunice Swangle, recommended her for a special program for Exceptionally Gifted and Accelerated Diligent Students, or "E.G.A.D.S." for short. It would involve sending young Lucy to a kind of boarding school for the summer. And best of all, the state offered to foot the bill.

Neil and Sandy were aghast. The entire concept was anathema to their sensibilities. They had only begun to come to grips with being separated from Lucy for seven hours a day though they had to admit the free time did give them an opportunity to recapture some of the spark that had so poignantly punctuated their relationship when it was still in its nascence.

It was their heart-felt conviction that the best interest of their daughter should always come first and foremost in every decision that was made in their household, and so, that night they sat Lucy down at the dinner spool and discussed the merits of her spending the summer at some kind of school where her talents would not be squandered.

Neil and Sandy prepared themselves for any reaction Lucy might experience in the heat of passion.. What could they expect? Violent caterwauling? Choking sobs? Descent into irretrievable catatonia?

Lucy was, of course, ecstatic at the idea. Anything had to be better than public school, which seemed to her just one vast, unfathomable barren wasteland of insensitivity and misunderstanding. She jumped up, knocking over her milk crate chair and rushed over to her parents and smothered them in hugs and wet kisses of enthusiasm. And of course her parents were willing to make any sacrifice for their baby's peace of mind, so it was settled.

The night before Lucy was to get on the big bus to go to her new school, her father slipped into her box to say good night. There he found her, carefully packing her vast Hot wheels and Matchbox collection into a large suitcase, admiring each one before she wrapped it with tissue paper and placed it delicately inside.

"Honey, what are you doing?" her father asked gingerly.

Fortunately, Lucy was about the only person in the world who understood exactly what it was he was saying all the time.

"I'm packing my cars for the trip silly!" she exclaimed.

"Angel, you can't take your cars to your new school. C'mon now kiddo. Don't you think you're a little old for that now? Huh? Waddaya say?"

"But Daddy! I have to take my cars!"

Neil knew he could not capitulate to his beloved daughter's heart wrenching appeal.

“Baby Cakes, if you want to go on this program, you’re just going to have to leave your cars here with us. Nothing will happen to them. I promise. We’ll take good care of them while you’re away at school.”

The thought of being so far from her cars for so long was nearly too much to bear. All was black before her eyes.

“Daddy, I’m taking my cars.” She was determined.

Neil had never heard such a tone in his daughter’s voice. Lucy had never contradicted him before. Perhaps it was the late hour of the night, or the stressful events which Neil had recently endured but for a second it kind of crossed his circuits, “Lucy!” He said sharply and then stopped.

After he had regained his composure he continued.

“Lucy,” he said calmly, “I know how much your Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars mean to you, but I have to say ‘no’.”

The word reverberated in her cranium.

“Believe me Lucy,” he continued, “This hurts me as much as it hurts you.”

Lucy was rendered speechless.

“Maybe you can choose one car from your collection to bring along. I guess that couldn’t hurt anything. Call it a compromise, eh?”

Lucy was incapable of responding.

“Well, good night sweetie,” he whispered as he slipped back out of her box, wondering if he had been too hard on her, but he knew, deep down inside, that he had to take a stand.

And so it was at the tender age of nine that Lucy’s life seemed to lose all purpose and sense of security. Everything had been stripped from her. Where once she had found sanctuary and solace she now only found confusion and turmoil. An unfamiliar feeling began to penetrate the thick, dense fog of dreams through which she normally viewed the world.

She had been betrayed. She suddenly felt trapped. She was engulfed by an overwhelming desire to flee, but she knew not where. And as these sensations of doubt and remorse assailed her in waves she slowly came to the difficult decision that her only available course of action was to run away from home, to flee, into the night, into the darkness ... into ... the unknown. As evening descended, Lucy made the final preparations before she stole away from the nurturing environment of her home and family, forsaking all that was familiar, to forge forward on her solo quest.

She thought of her self alone in a confounding and undoubtedly cruel world. But, perhaps somewhere, beyond the horizon, an inviting sanctuary awaited to embrace her.

She checked her list one last time. There was only one final step to undertake: the drafting of her farewell note. It was all anyone would have to remember her by. She wanted it to be stoic and concise.

“Dear Mom and Dad,

I’m going somewhere where things are fair.

Love, Lucy.”

Meanwhile, in another part of the shanty, Lucy’s parents were roused from their slumber by a loud shuffling noise outside. Neil was disoriented. Sandy was scared. She dug her mostly broken fingernails into her husband’s shoulders. Neil grabbed a hold of the only thing in the house which remotely resembled a weapon: a white and yellow plastic samurai sword which Lucy had named “Adversity.” He stealthily drew back the shabby rain coat which draped the front entrance and peered out onto the moon-lit lawn. In the bright blue light he could plainly make out a tall, distinguished gentleman pacing and shuffling back and forth. Neil immediately recognized him as Lewis Thistle, the extremely reclusive and eccentric billionaire who inhabited the palatial estate at the north end of Lake Whatchamacallit. Neil spun around and nearly beheaded Sandy who had crept up behind him.

Neil explained the situation to her, figuring that it would be best if *she* did the talking under the circumstances. Considering that she heard him utter, “Corn dog sphincter anus torque, pud knocker,” she had to agree with him. They invited Lewis Thistle inside.

Sandy showed him a chair, “Can I get you something to drink Mr. Thistle?”

“Um, no, thank you,” he said averting his eyes and fidgeting with a “joy buzzer” which Lucy had found that day, and which had been inadvertently left on the kitchen spool.

Neil poured him some diluted Kool-Aid. A crumbling saccharine tablet settled to the bottom of the glass as he set it daintily before his guest.

Louis Thistle swept something fuzzy off the knee of his perfectly pleated khaki pants and cleared his throat.

Neil and Sandy waited attentively.

“Ahem, I hope I haven’t caught you at a bad time,” Louis Thistle began in a self-effacing tone. “I suppose it *is* rather late.”

“Not at all,” Sandy assured him, yawning and still only half awake.

Ignoring her response all together, Lewis Thistle continued, “You see, I just happened to be in the neighborhood and, well, I don’t know where to begin really.”

He took a sip from his glass and winced.

“Well, it’s like this,” he began again. “I have this collection you see, of Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars. And my son, Willie, tells me that your daughter has the complete ‘Dukes of Hazzard’ series. Is this true Mr. Toastson?”

A pained expression flashed across Neil’s face as he struggled not to answer his guest. He looked to his wife.

Sandy sat down at the spool and cast Lewis an earnest gaze. “Why yes. As a matter of fact I believe she does Mr. Thistle. Why do you ask, pray tell?”

“Throughout my extensive traverses throughout the world I have searched high and low for these cars. You have to understand, these are not the kinds of things they auction off at Sotheby’s. I mean, sure, I could have them made, but it just wouldn’t be the same. They must be ‘authentic.’ I don’t know how else to put it to you Mr. and Mrs. Toastson, I *need* to acquire these cars.”

Sandy bit the inside of her cheek. “I must warn you Mr. Thistle. My little girl has become

quite attached to those little toys of hers. Why really, they're all she has," she tried desperately to explain.

"Believe you me, I know exactly where she's coming from. But let me make myself perfectly clear, I'm willing to pay any price. *Any price!*"

"There there Mr. Thistle."

Sandy patted him awkwardly on the shoulder to try to calm him. She looked for a clean napkin for him to wipe the spittle off of his lower lip with. "All we can do is ask her. Neil honey, why don't you go and wake up Lucy."

Neil knocked on the cardboard flap of her room. There was no answer ...

The moon glared cold that night on the bleak street. A chill wind was picking up. Lucy, who hadn't hardly ever been anywhere beyond her block except for school and the tiny run down strip plaza, didn't know where to turn. Although she knew what direction the downtown area was, and where the lake was, she had always been under the false impression that the city lay to north of her house, and that the lake was to the south. Of course it made no sense, considering the opposite, in fact, was true, but she was only nine years old. And so she decided to strike out for the west, (which was actually the east) where, just beyond the next rise (or so she had always imagined) she would come to the edge of the great wilderness which stretched unbounded from there to somewhere inside the arctic circle where it was too darn cold for any trees to grow. In that dense forest no one would ever find her and she could hollow out a huge log and live in it with a pet raccoon, just like this kid did in a book she had read.

As she made her way down the tree-lined street, the boughs of the big maples rustled

over her head. For the first time she began to realize that, owing in part to her stature, there were many obstacles, besides the hill at the west end (or was it the east end?) of the street over which she had never seen. For example, there were all the fences and walls of people's properties. She had never seen over them. What lay on the other side? Have *you* ever wondered? One may assume that there are normal back yards there, with grass, and bushes, maybe a barbeque, maybe some lawn furniture, who knows? Maybe there is a swimming pool even. At that moment though, Lucy wasn't so sure. Maybe there were other things behind those walls, like some kind of weird kids whose parents kept them there all the time and made them eat weird food, like lemon marang pie filling or egg plants, and forced them to speak a different language. Those kids might not have any idea about anything in the world beyond their little plot of land. It kind of makes you wonder.

Lost in speculation, Lucy ambled along. Everywhere she looked there were all kinds of rows of trees and houses which obscured and obstructed her sight. What kind of worlds did they conceal?

She didn't get very far, however, before she was abruptly jarred from her reveries by a strange sound. It was like a squeaking sound. It was a squeaking, chirping sound in stereo. She stopped and it kind of scared her because she was all alone and didn't know what the noise was or where it was coming from. After a brief perusal of the immediate vicinity she located the source at the foot of a big old tree. There she found some baby birds whose nest had fallen to the ground. They looked cold and hungry.

A wave of conflicting emotions swept over Lucy. On the one hand, she wasn't sure if she should touch the birds because she had heard that sometimes, if a baby has the scent of a human on it, then it's parents will abandon it.

"Maybe I should let nature take its course," she mused.

But the braying of the helpless creatures also elicited a profound sense of compassion in her. She desperately wanted to help them, but at first she wasn't quite sure how she could. She decided to take a towel from her nap sack and wrap them up in it. Then she remembered that there was a store near the strip plaza where they sold Bread, Beer, and Ice. It was open all the time, and it had a sign in the front window that read, in handwritten chicken scratch, "Live BaiT: WoRms. NigHt CrAwleRs."

After a seemingly interminable conversation with the weird convenience store clerk (who had a lot of frizzy dark curly hair and pointy side burns, and who had, kindly, set her straight on the "north, south" question) she left the neon buzz of the all night grocery behind. Trying hard not to think of anything except for the welfare of the tiny creatures who's mother had placed them in her care, she made her way back.

When she got to the spot where she had left the bundled up baby birds, they were nowhere to be seen.

Visions of a stealthy cat or some other nocturnal predator that preys on hapless little chicks, flashed through her mind, but she quickly dismissed such thoughts.

"Their Mamma must've come and taken them to a new nest," she concluded.

Although it was not hard for Lucy to believe this scenario, she slumped down beneath the big dark tree, and sat in the cold wet grass and cried silently.

Meanwhile, back at Lucy's shack, Lewis Thistle got on his cell phone. He spared no expense in rallying any and all state and local agencies to assist in finding the Toastson's missing child. He was, after all, himself a loving and caring parent.

After a frenzied search which kept Neil and Sandy up all night in tearful fits, Lucy and her toy car collection were recovered in one piece.

When asked why he hadn't thought it strange that a nine year old girl should be out buying worms all by herself at 2:00 in the morning, the young clerk, who, after violent interrogation, volunteered vital clues that ultimately enabled the police to find Lucy, replied, (between blows) "Well ... Ungh! She seemed ... Ungh! Like she knew what she was doing ... Ungh!"

The next day, Neil and Sandy introduced Lucy to Lewis Thistle.

As I'm sure you can imagine, she was hard pressed to part ways with her precious toys. After extensive deliberation and introspective soul searching however she eventually acquiesced to his convincing overtures. She drove a hard bargain though, in fact, she ended up making out with no less than a cool 2.5 million dallars.

To Lewis Thistle it was merely a drop in the bucket, a paltry sum, which may be why so many people were want to say that he never enjoyed those Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars half as much as Lucy had.

Now you know the story of how Lucy became a multi-millionaire as well as a bonafide philanthropist who gave generously to the needy. She gave especially to the other children in and around Dafton county. Even though it hurt her deeply to think about the things they had said and done, it was kind of her way of saying that she forgave them for being afraid and hateful of things they couldn't understand.

EPILOGUE

Years later, as Lewis Thistle was regaling an admirer with the colorful and animated tale

of how he came to possess the most prized of his many collections, he noticed, oddly enough, that neither of the baby blue “Uncle Jessie” pick-up trucks which he had purchased from Lucy Toastson so many years earlier had even the slightest hint of the infamous tooth marks incurred by the diabolical schnauzer dog!

Upon further investigation, he discovered that Lucy had had no less than three complete sets of the Dukes of Hazard cars, as well as two or three extra General Lees. When all was said and done, Lucy had secretly kept one set, and had, in point of fact, held out on Lewis Thistle.

Lewis Thistle brewed in his consternation for several days.

“How dare that little scoundrel try to pull the wool over *my* eyes?” he thought.

“I’ll show *her*,” you could hear him mutter.

“After all,” he would suddenly shout unexpectedly, at strange hours of the night, “I’m Lewis Thistle!”

Then, on the following Thursday, he read in the paper that Lucy Toastson, that masquerader, that chiseler, had sent another impoverished child off to college.

And that was when Lewis Thistle had a change of heart. He never did expose her for her harmless act of duplicity, if that’s what you want to call it, and nobody, not even Lewis Thistle, or anyone else who might’ve known, ever thought the less of her for it.

FIN