



Watching Over WASEL

BY JULIA OLDROYD

(Based on a true story)

Call on the name of . . . God for protection

(3 Nephi 4:30).

The sun hung low after a warm summer day in Pacheco, in the Latter-day Saint colonies in Mexico. As five-year-old Mae and two-year-old Wasel played outside, they could smell smoke wafting from adobe chimneys and open fires. Supper would be ready soon. Sure enough, Mama called, “Mae! Wasel! Go wash up.” The girls quickly obeyed and went inside to eat.

After supper, Mama said, “Come, little Wasel.” Every night Wasel went with Mama and Papa to herd the cows. Mae and baby David stayed home with Aunt Hattie. Wasel loved this time alone with her parents. She was so excited that she ran outside still clutching her dinner spoon.

“I don’t think Wasel should come with us tonight. We have to care for some horses, and it may be too far for her to walk,” Papa said.

Mama nodded. “Wasel, Mama and Papa are going on a long walk tonight. Take that spoon back to the house and give it to Aunt Hattie. Then you can play with the other children, and tomorrow you can come with us to get the cows.”

Wasel just stood there, holding her spoon. She didn’t want to go back to the house.

“Run along now,” Mama said. Wasel turned and ran

toward the house, but when her parents were out of sight, she put her spoon near the door and decided to go get the cows after all. She knew the way to the pasture. But she didn’t know that her parents hadn’t gone straight there.

The shadows grew long as the sun sank lower. Wasel walked and walked, through fields and corn patches. Wolves howled in the distance. Wasel came to a marshy area and walked there for a long time. She liked to feel the mud squishing between her bare toes.

When Mama and Papa returned from the cow pasture, Mama went inside to put the children to bed, and Papa went to the barn to take care of the animals.

“Hattie, where is Wasel?” Mama asked.

Aunt Hattie froze. “Wasn’t she with you?”

“Yes, but we sent her back here.”

“Well, I haven’t seen her!” Aunt Hattie exclaimed.

Mama and Aunt Hattie called for Wasel and searched in all the rooms and in the yard. Then Mama ran to the barn.

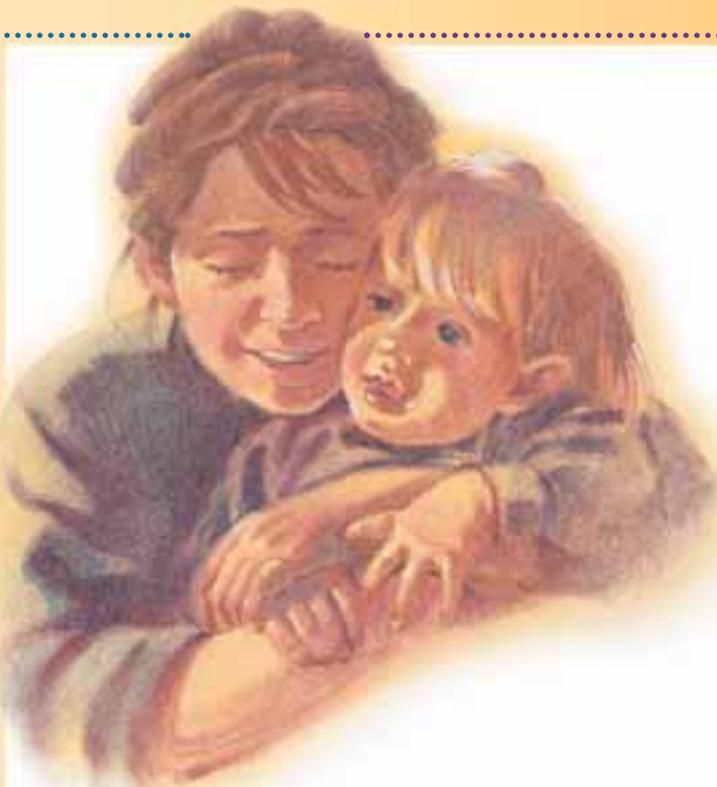
“Wasel isn’t here. I’m going to look for her,” she told Papa.

“She’s probably asleep somewhere,” Papa said. “I’ll look in the house.”

Mama knew that Wasel wasn’t in the house. She ran to the river and the cornfield calling, “Wasel! Wasel! Can you hear me, Wasel?” There was no answer, so she returned to the house.

“I think we need help,” Papa said.





Just then, Aunt Hattie pointed out the window. “Look! It’s Brother Carroll.”

Papa ran outside and stopped him. “Wasel is lost,” he explained.

“I’m on my way to the church for a meeting,” Brother Carroll said. “I’ll tell everyone that you need help looking for her.”

When Brother Carroll told Bishop Hardy that Wasel was lost, Bishop Hardy dismissed the meeting and asked the brethren to go search for her.

As everyone searched under the beds, in the out-buildings, and through the house, Mama began to fear for Wasel’s life. “We are wasting time looking for her here. We have already done that, and I know she’s not here!” she cried.

Wasel’s grandpa gathered the men together. “Let’s divide into small groups and circle the area,” he said. “Whoever finds her will return here and fire a gun five

times to signal the rest of us.”

One group went with the bishop. They followed the road toward the cow pasture.

“Look, Bishop!” someone shouted. “Little footprints.”

The men held their lanterns high and carefully followed the footprints until they reached the marsh. The ground was too moist there to hold any tracks.

Bishop Hardy instructed the men to kneel on the soggy ground. Then he prayed for Wasel’s safety and for guidance to find her.

With teary eyes, Bishop Hardy rose. He thought he heard something and paused to listen. There, very faintly—yes! He could hear her! The others strained but heard nothing. “She’s calling for her mama!” he exclaimed.

Bishop Hardy ran toward the sound he heard so clearly. He stopped occasionally to listen—“Mama!”—and hurried on. He ran through fields and over hills for nearly two miles (3 km). He found himself in a rugged canyon, the moonlight falling softly around him. Then, suddenly, he saw Wasel walking wearily along the mountainside. Bishop Hardy ran to her and gathered her into his arms. “Mama,” Wasel whispered as she fell asleep.

The bishop carried Wasel back to the house as quickly as he could go. Mama took Wasel in her arms, and tears of joy flowed freely from her eyes. She offered a silent prayer of thanks to Heavenly Father for bringing little Wasel home safely.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bishop Hardy fired the gun with joy. When Papa arrived, he hugged his wife and daughter, weeping with gratitude. Then everyone knelt in a circle, and Bishop Hardy thanked the Lord for protecting Wasel. He knew that he couldn’t have heard her soft cries on his own. But the Lord was watching over Wasel and had helped him to find her. ●

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“God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him. . . . [Seek] divine guidance through prayer.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Back to Gospel Basics,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 91.