

Margaret McNeil's

Great of Escape

BY BRITNEY RULE

(Based on a true story)

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

As I walked along the trail, prairie grass rippled in the breeze like gentle ocean waves. My cow turned aside to eat some grass that was dry and brown from the heat. “Get back here!” I called. “We can find you better grass than that.”

Although the wind was cool and pleasant, I was hot from carrying my four-year-old brother, James. He had the measles, and Mother, who was not feeling well, had tied him onto my back with her shawl. I could feel hard knots of muscle forming in the sore spots on my back, but I had no choice but to keep moving. The wagon train would pass us by if we stopped.

Our family cow started to wander off again, and I ran after her. Making sure she got enough to eat was an endless process. But we needed the milk, and I was determined to make it to Zion safe and sound even if I had to herd a cow and carry my little brother the whole way.

That night in camp I milked the cow and laid James down to sleep. I doubted that he would, but I was

determined to get as much rest as I could before his sickly cries woke me. Unfortunately, I was nudged before I even had a chance to drift off to sleep. Father, still wearing his dusty trail clothes, was standing there with a concerned look on his face.

“Margaret, did you tie the cow to the wagon?” he asked.

Our cow was nowhere to be seen, and I soon found myself back on the prairie. We started out looking near camp, but there was no trace of her. I left the search group and walked over a small hill near the river. The air was full of the chirping of crickets and the rustle of wind in the grass. I was barefooted, but the evening was warm and the prairie dirt was hard and dry, so I didn't mind.

Suddenly the ground turned soft beneath my feet—and moved! I froze, working up the courage to look down. When I did, I wished I hadn't. I was standing in a bed of snakes! They slithered all about my feet, their scales glinting in the rising moon. I grew weak at the



knees and almost fainted into the writhing mass, but I forced myself to stiffen. What should I do?

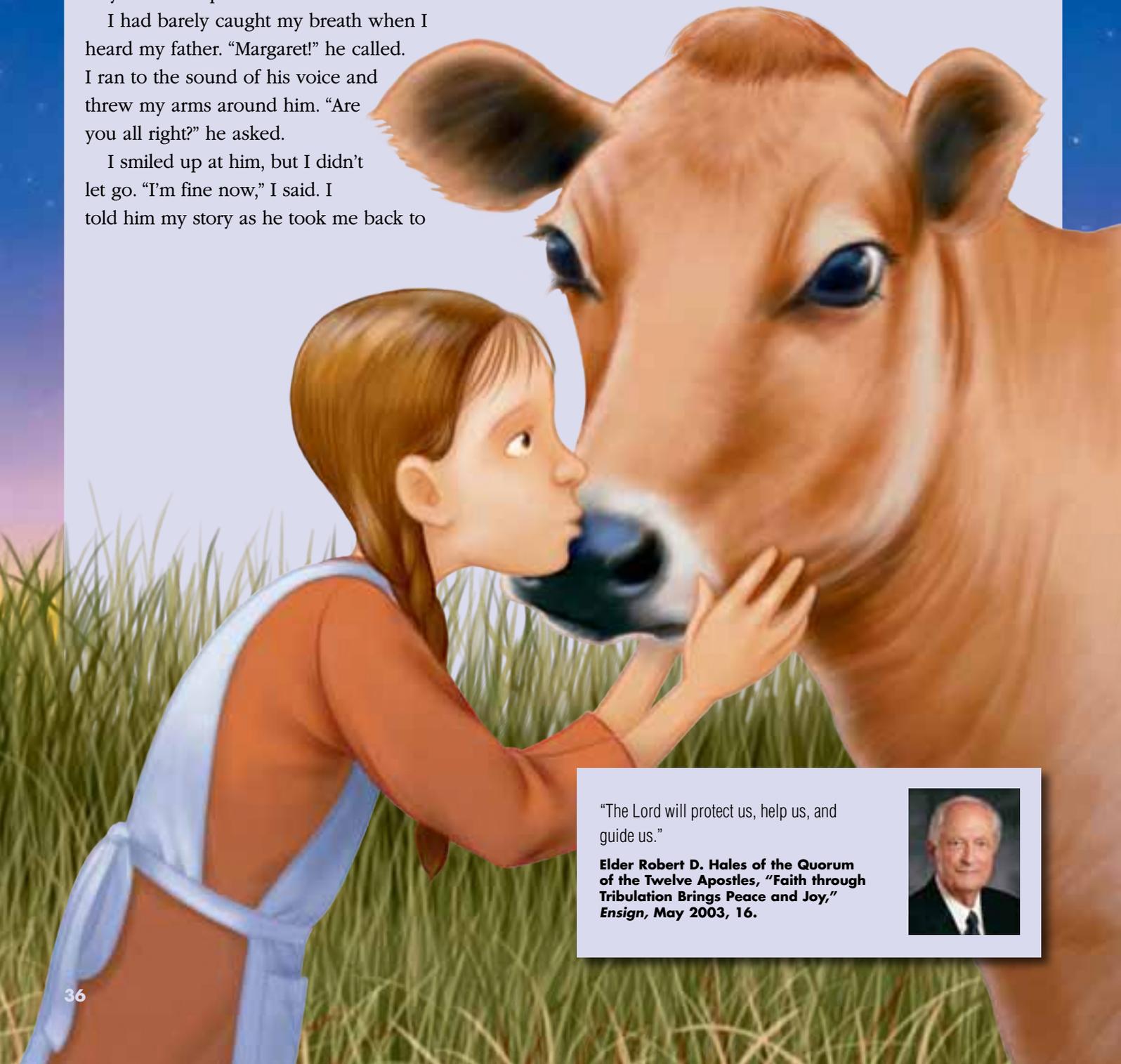
I decided to say a prayer. It was short, but definitely sincere. Immediately after saying “amen,” I jumped sideways. Heavenly Father must have blessed my leap, because I landed just clear of the snakes. I ran off a ways and collapsed.

I had barely caught my breath when I heard my father. “Margaret!” he called. I ran to the sound of his voice and threw my arms around him. “Are you all right?” he asked.

I smiled up at him, but I didn’t let go. “I’m fine now,” I said. I told him my story as he took me back to

the wagons. I was so grateful to be safe that when I saw our cow I gave her a kiss on her disobedient nose.

We arrived safely in Utah on October 4, 1859, thanks to Heavenly Father’s watchful care. And, as always, the cow was by my side. ●



“The Lord will protect us, help us, and guide us.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Faith through Tribulation Brings Peace and Joy,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 16.

