

History – Craddock Family

Hard Times



Chapter 2

“So you see Peggy - it was always difficult living with my little brother and sister, as we were all so young. The photo above is of me at home. It was a selfie taken on my cell phone around 1934, I think. We had to look after ourselves. We had a home, but no mother and no father. People used to say that everyone had a mother, but we did not. They were too expensive.

But, we had so much fun without a mother. We watched TV until midnight, we would fight with each other and it didn't matter who won, who lost, cried or who laughed. There was no mother and no father there to tell us to stop. Sometimes we played football in the bathroom. David, my brother was the goalkeeper and he guarded the mirror, which was our goal post. Terese and I would try and hit the mirror with the ball. The mirror was full of cracks. Then one day it broke.”

“Cooking dinner was a problem as we were all so small. But by standing one on top of each other, the three of us became tall enough to reach the cooking stove. If we were tired we did not cook and drank beer or cognac. We never ate vegetables or fruit. Our favorite food was sausages. Terese used to make the sausages. It was great fun. She would buy five kilos of sausage meat and my brother and I would jump on it to make it soft and long.”

“Terese cooked only one sausage for all of us, but what a huge sausage. It was almost as long as a football field.”

“Perhaps you don't believe me, Peggy, but you were not there, so how can you know? I tell you – if you had seen this long sausage you would know I am telling the truth. I don't lie, I tell the truth. But, sometimes because I am old I do forget small details in my story. For example, I can't remember now whether the sausage was red, blue or yellow.”

“When we ate the sausage. It was wonderful. We ate and ate that night. Then my brother was sick and vomited. What a mess. He was covered in bits of sausage. So we got the garden hose and washed him with it. We wanted to do it outside, but he was so cold. He didn't want to go outside in the dark. So we hosed him down in the dining room. Then we washed the dirty dishes with the hose. That was fun too, as the water went everywhere. Of course, we had to decide what we do with the rest of the sausage. When we measured it, we still had seven metres left over. David had a good idea. He used it to fix up some of the damage we had done in the bathroom when we played football. It took over a metre of sausage to join all the broken bits of the mirror together.”

“ During the cold winter nights when we needed wood for the fire, we would cut off the legs of tables and chairs and then burn them. They burned so well.”

Anyway it was one of those winter nights when there were boring programs on TV, so we turned it off and talked. My sister had been very quiet all day. I looked at my sister — Terese — what the matter? She looked sad. We don't have a mother, she murmured. Tears came to her eyes — every child needs a mother. We should find one. David, my brother shook his head,

“Why do we want a mother — she'd only boss us about.”

I agreed, but Terese kept saying that we should have a mother. She would cook, clean and tell us stories at night when the TV programs are boring.



After a long time thinking, we agreed that we would all go out and look for a mother and bring her back here. Terese was so happy. But David did not want a mother. He sat on his cushion and laughed at us. “No, no. She will put us to bed early and she won't let us play with our football in the bathroom.”

“Have you looked at mothers? They often get angry at children, tell them to stop this, do that, do the other thing — and I have seen mothers in the street. They carry shopping baskets full of boring food like bread, milk and vegetables. And some mothers are not well dressed. Why should we have a mother? We don't need one.”

Terese was different. She frowned and looked at both of us.

“I want a mother” she said softly. “I know where to find one. But, I agree with David — we don't want a mother who does bad things to us — we want a nice brand new good mother. I have an idea.”

She explained her idea. She said that first of all we should not ask anyone if they wanted to be our mother, because then she could then say either Yes or No. Terese explained and said she would choose someone...go right up to the person, look them in the face, take their hand and say, Mother, please come home and look after your children.

Terese said she would look for a pretty woman. She would then call her mother and bring her to the house. It seemed a good idea. Terese said she knew where to find new mothers.

I liked the idea, but David wanted a father, not a mother. So we agreed to do both. Terese would go out on Saturday and find a perfect mother. David would also go out on Saturday and find a perfect father. They would bring them to the house. I agreed to stay at home to make it tidy, so our new mother and father would both be happy.

It was a Friday evening. So the plans had to take place the next day. David and Terese talked deep into the night and they worked out what they were going to do.

David said he would dress up like a tramp, make his face dirty and put on a whining voice when he saw a man he wanted for a father.



Terese would have none of that and said she would dress up in her best clothes and be nice and polite. So next day they left home and went in different directions.

Late that night they both came home and there was no mother and father. David still looked dirty. He had been in a fight. Terese was depressed. Neither would speak to me until I gave them a big bar of chocolate.



Teresa said that when she left home it was a lovely sunny morning and she was happy. She went to a church where there was a wedding going on and quietly waited until the bride was coming out of the church. She looked at the bride and immediately knew this pretty woman was going to be a good mother. So she took her hand and said “Mummy, please come home with me. We need you.”

The woman stopped, looked at Terese in her pretty dress and murmured gently

“You poor little thing.”

But then something happened. She said there was a man who was holding the bride's hand. He looked happy. But it was only for a moment. His face scowled. When he spoke his voice was like a tin can being dragged against a concrete wall.

He screamed “You didn't tell me you had a daughter?”

“I don't ” said the woman.

Terese said she held on tight to the woman's hand and said with a sweet voice,

“Please come home, mother.”

The man slapped the woman's face and shouted,

“Where did this girl come from? You tell me you have no daughter. Look she is right there.”

He slapped the woman three times on the face and screamed at her.

“I'm going to get a divorce, right now.”

He turned and ran away. The woman began crying loudly

“ I don't want a daughter, ever.”

“So,” said Terese, “I came home. I decided she was not a nice woman anyway. She wouldn't make a good mother.”

David looked glum, and I asked him about finding a father. It turned out that he too had gone to a church where there was a wedding taking place. He said he decided to go inside the church to see the wedding. He sneaked up to the front row just as the priest was getting ready to ask the man if he wanted to marry the woman next to him.

Before the man answered the priest, another man gave him a shiny gold ring. But, at that moment the man dropped the ring on the floor and it rolled towards David. It made a tinkling sound and the whole church, which was full of people, became quiet. The man who was getting married bent down to pick up the ring.

David said in a loud clear voice “Daddy, I want you come home. Me and my brother and sister want you to come home, Daddy.”

David was quiet. Terese and I looked at him for a long time. He said nothing, so we asked him again,



“Tell us, David, tell us.”

He shrugged, “It was strange. The man looked surprised but the women in white suddenly hit him with her bunch of flowers. Then she took off one shoe and hit him with that too. He was shocked and sat on the floor protecting his head.”

“So,” said Terese, “what did you do?”

“I did nothing” said, David.

There was another silence. I asked David how he got the bruises on his face.

“It was the man that did it. The women in white shouted at him – you have a son, you hide him from me, and look at him – all dirty and uncared for. You beast.”

She screamed, then hit him again and again and said many rude words.”

“The man picked up the women's shoe and threw it at me. It hit my face. That made the woman in white even angrier. She hit the man again and said, if you can't look after your son, I will. Look at him, poor... dirty and in old clothes. I'm going to take him home with me now. She grabbed me, and she shouted at the man. You can go to your own home, I don't ever want to see you again. The marriage is off – forever.”

“So” said David, “I was scared, because both the man and woman had been very nice to each other before I arrived. I kicked the woman. She let me go and I came home.”

He looked at us both and shook his head sadly.

“We made a mistake today – there are no nice mothers and fathers in the world. All we have is each other.”