

I. *Little Christian Hears of the Celestial City*



Little Christian lived in a great city called Destruction. Its streets were full of very young animals who laughed and played all day long. This was in the summertime when the sun was shining and the city looked bright and pleasant. On the rainy days in winter the children did not feel so happy, and they would sometimes be glad to sit quietly and listen to stories.

Now and then strangers would come to the city for a little time, and these kind visitors always tried to make friends with the children and were willing to tell them stories whenever they would listen.

“There is a beautiful country,” they would say, “far away from this city. A very good and wise King rules over it, who loves little creatures dearly. The Prince to whom your city belongs is wicked and cruel, and he hates our good King. But one day an army will come from the King’s country to fight against your Wicked Prince, and this city will be burned, and all the townsfolk in it will be killed.”

Then the children asked, “What will become of us?”

And the wise strangers always answered, “You must leave this city now, while you are young and strong, and travel to the King’s country. In the Celestial City where He lives you will be quite safe.”

Little Christian heard this many times, and he often thought about it; but whenever



he said to his playfellows, "Shall we go to the Celestial City?" they laughed at him and told him that it was only a make-believe story about the King, and that no city could be better or safer than their own.

But little Christian felt quite sure that the strangers had spoken the truth; and one day he found an old Book, in which were written the very same things about the King and the Celestial City and their own Wicked Prince and his city, which would certainly be burned when the King came.

He showed the Book to his companions, but they laughed all the more and said, "That Book was written hundreds of years ago. It is of no use now. The King's army has never come, and very likely it never will. At any rate we may as well play as long as we can."

But little Christian did not want to play. He felt tired and unhappy, and he sat down and wondered whether he could find the way to the Celestial City by himself. He was such a little rabbit that he was afraid he might be lost if he tried to make a long journey alone. He opened his Book again, and he read a beautiful story in it about the King's own Son, who had once visited the City of Destruction and had spoken kindly to the young animals in the street, saying, "Let the little children come unto me."

If He were only here now, thought little Christian, perhaps He would take me back with Him; but I could never go all that long way alone!

Then the tears came into his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. They fell upon his whiskers and his fur and his clothes, and as he brushed them away, he saw how soiled and dusty his little suit had become. He had worn it a long time, and he had played so much that the cloth was getting quite thin and shabby. This added to his sadness, for he thought that if he *did* find his way to the Celestial City, his clothes would be worn out long before he got there, and how could he expect the King to receive a little rabbit dressed in nothing but rags?



At last he took up his Book and went home, and his nanny wondered why he looked so tired and sad. He told her that he would like to go to the Celestial City; but she laughed as his playmates had done, and said, “You are a silly boy. There is no Celestial City. If you go wandering along the roads after those strangers, you will get lost.”

So little Christian went to bed and cried until he fell asleep.

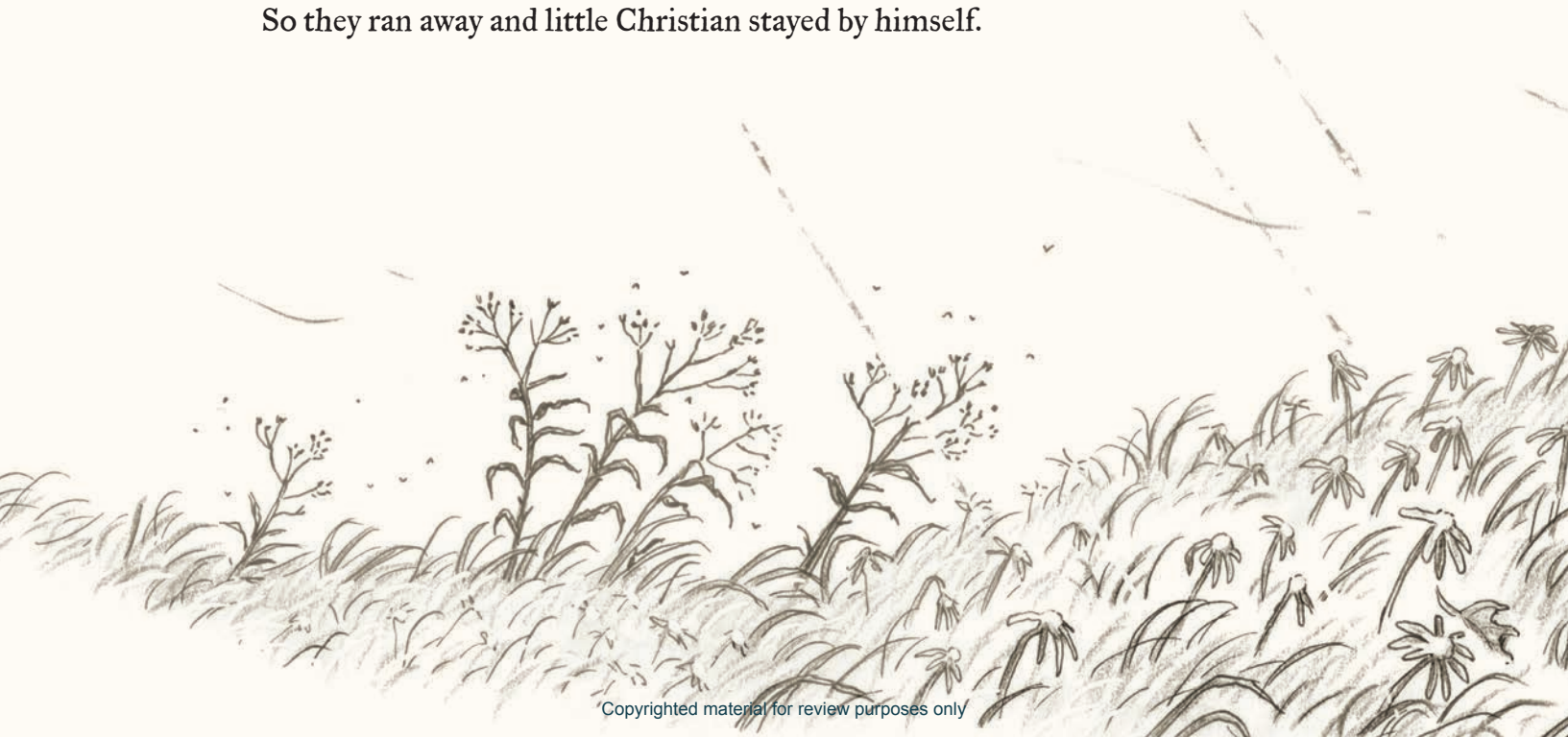
2. Little Christian Is Found by Evangelist



When little Christian went out the next morning the sun was shining and his companions were running about. They called to him to join them, but he said, “I cannot play. I think we ought to start on our journey.”

“What a foolish boy you are,” they cried, “to be always talking about that Celestial City! You had better go and look for it instead of crying up and down and spoiling all our fun.”

So they ran away and little Christian stayed by himself.



Presently Christiana came down the street with her baby sister. She had been standing by when the boys had laughed at Christian the day before, and she had felt very sorry that he should be teased. Christian liked Christiana, and he was glad to see her coming.

She stopped to speak to him.

“You are crying again, little Christian! You should not listen to what the strangers say if it makes you so unhappy. Come into the fields, and we will make daisy chains for baby.”

Little Christian thought he would like that. Christiana was gentle, and though she did not believe the stories he had told her out of his Book, she never teased him as the boys did.

“You know,” he said, as they walked along, “I *must* go to the King, because I have a burden to carry, and no one but He can take it from me.”

“Where is your burden?” asked Christiana.

“It is on my back, and it feels so heavy that it makes me too tired to play.”



Christiana looked very serious. “I think you must be ill, little Christian, if you fancy such things. You haven’t any burden on your back.”

“Ah,” said the little rabbit, “you cannot see it, but I can feel that it is there, and I shall always be tired until it is gone.”

The three children stayed in the fields and were very happy together; but when Christian went home at night he began to think of the Celestial City again and fretted until his nanny was quite angry with him. He had no kind mother to love and comfort him, and his father was one of the great men of the city and had no time to notice his little son.

Christian hoped that he would meet Christiana again in the morning, but she was busy at home; and the other boys and girls would have nothing to do with him, because they said he was dull and stupid and could not play properly. So he wandered off into the fields by himself and sat down upon a bank to think. After a while, he heard a step near to him, and looking up he saw one of the strangers on his way to the City—an owl with a serious and pleasant face, whose name was Evangelist. He had seen little Christian before, and he turned aside to speak to him.

“What are you crying for?” he asked, for there were tears in the child’s eyes.

Little Christian felt so comforted by the sound of Evangelist’s gentle voice that he told him all his troubles at once. How he wished to obey the King, and how his playmates had laughed at him, and how even his nanny and Christiana did not believe that the stories about the Celestial City were true.

Then Evangelist looked at him very kindly. “The stories are all quite true,” he said. “The King loves little children. If you will obey Him and begin your journey, He will watch over you all the way, and when you reach the Celestial City you will be happy forever.”

“I would go now,” said little Christian, “if I only knew the way.”



Evangelist turned around and looked across the field, along the path by which he had come. “Do you see there is a gate at the other side of the plain?” And he pointed to it with the tip of his wing.

But little Christian’s eyes were still dim with tears, so he could not see the gate.

“Well,” said Evangelist, “there is a light shining above it. Can you see that?”

“Yes,” said the little rabbit. “I think I can.”

“The way to the Celestial City is through that gate. Now I will give you a message from the King.” And Evangelist drew out a paper, which he put into little Christian’s hand.

There were words written upon it in gold and beautiful colors, and Christian read them aloud:

**“I LOVE THEM THAT LOVE ME,
AND THOSE THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.”**

“That is the King’s promise to all His little children. So do not cry anymore, but go quickly to that gate and knock. One of the King’s servants will open it, and he will tell you where to go next.”

3. Obstinate and Pliable



Some of the boys were playing near the gate of the city, and they saw Evangelist speaking to little Christian. They were not surprised at this, because they knew that the strangers who said they came from the Celestial City always talked to the children, but when Evangelist turned away, and little Christian began to run across the plain toward the Narrow-gate [some called it the Wicket-gate], they all wondered where he was going.

“Little Christian is running away!” cried one.

“He must be going to look for that Celestial City,” said another.

“Then he will be lost!” exclaimed a third.

“We ought to go after him and bring him back.”

There were two young moles named Obstinate and Pliable, who knew little Christian very well. They were older than he was, but the three had often played together. Obstinate was not a pleasant companion, for he loved to have his own way, and Pliable used to give in to him for the sake of peace. Little Christian did not care much for either of them, but he liked Pliable better.

These two moles were vexed when they saw their little playmate running alone over the fields, for although they were often cross and disagreeable to him, they did not like to think of his being lost.

“We must make him come back,” said Obstinate. “What a stupid rabbit he is to believe everything he is told!”

“Come along, then,” said Pliable. “I will go with you.”

So the two boys went off, and as they ran, they shouted to little Christian to wait for them.

But the child was frightened when he heard their voices and would not even look around.

If they take me back, he thought, perhaps I may never be able to get away again.

He ran as fast as he could, but he soon began to feel tired because of the burden upon his back, and Obstinate and Pliable were taller and stronger than he was, so before long they overtook him.

“Where are you going?” cried Obstinate. “I wonder what you mean by making us run after you in this way!”

“I am going to the King’s City,” said little Christian. “Won’t you come with me?”

Obstinate laughed. “I should think not! What would be the good, when we are as happy as possible at home?”

“We should be a great deal happier with the King. His City is more beautiful than this, and we shall be quite safe there. I have told you before that our own city is not a safe place.”

“As if you knew anything about it!” said Obstinate. “Why do you talk such nonsense?”

“It is not nonsense. It is written in my Book.”

Then Obstinate laughed again. “How many times am I to tell you that your Book is full of rubbish? There is not one word true. Now, are you coming back or not?”

Obstinate looked very cross, and little Christian’s heart began to beat faster and faster, but he answered bravely, “No, I am going to the King.”

“Well, you may go, then,” said Obstinate. “Come, Pliable, we might have saved ourselves the trouble of running after such a silly rabbit. He doesn’t know when he is well-off.”

But Pliable stood still. “Don’t you laugh at him,” he said. “Just supposing the Book is true, he will be better off than we are. I think I shall go too.”

“Oh, do come with me!” cried little Christian. “You do not know how happy we shall be when we are living with the King.”

“Are you sure you can find the City?” asked Pliable.

“Yes, for Evangelist told me what to do. We must go to that gate beyond the plain, and the gatekeeper there will show us the way.”

“You don’t mean to say you are going?” said Obstinate. “Why, even if there were a Celestial City, two boys like you could never find it.”

Pliable did not answer, but he made a few steps forward by the side of little Christian. He had often listened to the words of the strangers, and he thought, *I may as well go as far as the Narrow-gate and see what the road is like.*

“I’m not surprised at little Christian,” continued Obstinate, “but really, Pliable, you ought to have more sense. Just come back with me, and I’ll not tell anyone that you said you were going.”

But Pliable was not very fond of Obstinate, and he felt pleased at the idea of having his own way, so he answered, “It’s no use talking. I’ve made up my mind. Good-bye, if you won’t come too.”

“No, thank you! I’m glad enough to get rid of you both.” And, with a mocking smile on his face, Obstinate turned back toward the City of Destruction.