

Graham and the Yellow Envelope

A story by Bill Loader

Graham discovered a large yellow envelope in his schoolbag. Who had put it there? Was it for him? Or was it from the teacher for his mum and dad? There was nothing on the outside of the envelope. So when the horse he was riding home stopped for a drink, Graham got down off the horse and sat on the big old watermelon that had been placed beside the road where the elves used to dance. He opened the envelope and looked inside. Inside was a green card and on the card it said: "Don't forget to collect the money from the barbershop."

Graham never went to the barbershop because his mum cut his hair, so this was mysterious. The barbershop was at the other end of town. He hopped back on his horse and rode to the other end of town. The barbershop was closed. So he went around the back. He had never been there before. He stepped up to the back door of the shop and knocked. A voice from the house next door called out: "Please come here!" Graham wasn't sure, but he went over all the same.

As soon as he walked up to the door, it swung open and a huge bird reached out its claws and lifted Graham up off the ground. He was very scared. The bird had a long sharp beak and lots of pink feathers and very large wings. With a flap of its wings it rose up into the sky, carrying Graham. Graham could see the whole town from high up in the sky. For a moment he forgot what was happening. It was all so interesting. There was his school. There was his horse tied up in front of the barbershop.

Higher and higher the bird flew, until, it reached the big hill outside town and there, on a rocky outcrop it landed. Graham came to his senses. The bird had taken him to its nest. What was going to happen? Did he need to be scared? What was the bird going to do?

The bird dropped him right inside the nest. It was warm and covered with soft feathers. In a strange way Graham felt very safe. He felt so safe, that he felt all very relaxed and fell asleep. He slept for a long time. In the middle of the night he woke up. The bird was sitting above him, keeping him warm. He could hear singing. When he looked out into the dark night, he saw a bright light. In the light he could see lots of birds, singing.

The bird became excited, grasped Graham in its gentle claws and flew up into the sky. Soon Graham found himself among all these birds as they sang. Where were they flying to? They flew over the hills, down the valley, until they came to a little shed behind a hotel. Graham's bird landed next to the shed and began to walk inside. Graham went in, too. He was wondering if this had something to do with the message in the envelope. Was this another barbershop? Would he find the money here?

Graham used to think about money a lot. "If only I had lots of money, I would be really happy." The bird seemed to know what Graham was thinking and smiled in a bird kind of way. In fact this bird seemed very kind and very wise. Was the bird going to take Graham to the treasure?

They went inside the little shed and the bird picked Graham up in its beak and placed him in the box which had food for the animals. Yes, there were some animals there. Graham sat up and looked around. Then three more birds came inside. Each one had a big yellow envelope in its beak. "Ah, now I know," thought Graham. They have come to bring me the money. He was very excited.

The first bird placed the envelope right in Graham's lap. He opened it. No money, but a shiny mirror. He looked into it and saw his mum. His mum spoke to him out of the mirror: "Graham, I will always

love you and always care for you." Graham began to cry - not because he was sad, but because this was very special. When he opened the next envelope, there was another mirror, and there was his dad. His dad spoke to him out of the mirror: "Graham, I will always love you. You will always be special for me?" This made Graham feel very warm inside, like someone had given him a thousand dollars.

Then came the third bird and again placed the envelope in Graham's lap. Again, when he opened it, he saw a mirror. Again a voice spoke from the mirror. This was his own voice and this time this was a real mirror. He was looking at himself! "Graham, I will always love you, when you are happy and when you are sad. I will always love you. That is my treasure for you."

This time Graham smiled inside himself. He turned over in his bed, opened his eyes and could see the stable, the animals and the baby Jesus lying in the feeder box. He was sure that Jesus was smiling at him. When his mum and dad came in to see if he was awake, they said: "Graham, why are you smiling?" Graham rubbed his eyes, looked around him and said, "I like birds." His mum and dad looked at each other and smiled. "You must have had a happy dream." "Yes," said Graham, "and it was worth more than a thousand dollars!"