

THE BIG STORM

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It was quickly becoming dark, and we still needed to get home. We were trying to stay ahead of the storm that was coming from the west. The clouds were getting darker and darker, and we still had a long way to go before we would reach our house. There was lightning everywhere, and the crash of thunder sounded like a war was all around us.

It had been a long day. We had gone to the city to sell tomatoes and to buy our mother a new stove. Now we were on our way home, but the weather was not good.

It was getting so dark we could see the lights of the town, but they were still very small. Our little pony was running as fast as he could, but we were afraid the storm would be upon us before we could reach our home.

My brother Stephen cried out, “What should we do? The storm is coming!”

He looked back at the storm and yelled over the noise, “We might get blown away if we don’t reach town soon!”

I tried to find the fastest way around all the ruts in the road to make the best time we could. Our little pony cart was bouncing up and down as we traveled along the old dirt road. It was getting darker and harder to see. Pugsy, our pony, knew the way home, but the road was rough.

We were coming up to the Swanson’s farm.

“Do you think the Swanson’s are home?” Stephen asked.

“I’m not sure. If we stop and they aren’t home, we might not be able to outrun this storm,” I answered.

“I think we should try,” Stephen yelled back.

I decided to stop to see if the Swanson's would take us in until the storm passed over. I pulled up in front of their house, jumped out of the cart and knocked on their door. No one answered. I tried to open the door, but it was locked. I even checked the windows, but they were locked as well.

I ran back to the cart and told Stephen no one was home.

Then I got into the cart and started back to the road that led to our home

The rain began to pour down on us. The lightning got stronger. The thunder got louder, and yet we were still moving slowly down the road to our house.

Just then Stephen yelled out, "Kurt! Look behind us! I think there is a tornado coming. What should we do?"

Coming right behind us was a big black funnel cloud. Dirt, dust, rocks, and sand were being blown everywhere. I knew we couldn't outrun the tornado.

"What should we do?" I asked myself.

As I looked back, I saw the Swanson's house was being lifted up by the storm, and it was ripped into pieces.

I thought to myself how lucky it was that the Swanson's weren't home and that we weren't there either.

We pushed our little pony that was pulling our small cart, the storm was catching up to us. Right then we started to lift off the ground. Pugsy, Stephen, the cart, and I were leaving the road and being sucked up inside the tornado.

My brother and I both screamed like little girls. "Aieeee, what's happening to us?!"

We started to spin around and around. We were going faster and faster. I was getting dizzy. It was so dark I could not tell if Stephen was still in the cart or not. I reached back, and I felt him. He was still screaming, but I couldn't hear him. We were going up and up.

Sometime after that I blacked out. I have no memory of what happened after that.

When I came to, I was still in the cart, Pugsy was eating grass, and Stephen was looking around.

"How long have we been here?" I asked Stephen shaking my head to clear my thoughts.

“Not very long.” He answered.

Then he commented, “Boy was that some trip! It was better than any amusement ride I’ve ever been on.”

“Where are we?” I asked.

“From what I can tell we are close to Douglastown,” Stephen replied.

“Douglastown? That’s twenty kilometers past our house. Did the tornado carry us all the way here?” I asked.

Stephen nodded yes.

We all seemed to be OK. I checked the cart and Pugsy. To my surprise, the stove was still tied in the cart and was not damaged at all.

“How in the world did we survive that storm?” I asked Stephen.

“I have no idea. The storm just suddenly set us here. Afterward it kept going east. I have heard about people being moved by a tornado, but I never believed it could really happen, especially not be killed. As far as I can tell, we aren’t even hurt,” Stephen answered as he told me about what had happened.

He had not been knocked out, so he remembered everything.

I looked around myself. In the distance, I could see Douglastown.

“It’s going to take us two days to get home. Pugsy’s tired. Why don’t we stay the night here and then in the morning we can head back home?” I suggested to Stephen.

He agreed. We took our things out of the cart and released Pugsy from his harness so he could graze on the grass.

We put our damp bedrolls under the cart to get some sleep. The rain was still falling but not as hard as before. It took a while before we fell asleep because we talked about what we had just been through. We were still a little shaken up.

In the morning, we put the harness back on Pugsy, hooked him to the cart and started on our trip home. The road was muddy and in places very difficult. The storm had caused so much damage. There were trees across the road and small rivers had formed as the heavy rain flowed to the valley below.

Pugsy was a brave pony. He kept moving forward even when the road was difficult.

Many times Stephen and I had to get out of the cart to help push.

It was almost nightfall when we arrived at an inn on the side of the road. We did not have any money, but we were hoping that they might be generous and give us some food and a place to sleep.

The innkeeper came out to meet us.

He asked, "Are you Kurt and Stephen Williams from Turksburgh?"

We said, "Yes, that's us. Why?"

There was a report that you were caught in that horrible storm last night. Everyone thinks you are dead. People have been looking for you all day," he told us. "What happened to you anyway?"

"We don't know. The last thing we remember was we were being pulled up inside a tornado. I thought we were goners!" Stephen answered.

The innkeeper offered us dinner and a place to sleep. He told us he would send someone ahead to Turksburgh to let everyone know we were OK. After resting we would be on our way home the next day.

The Innkeeper knew for years to come he would be able to tell his guests how he took care of the two boys and the pony that had survived the big storm.

The next day, people from the surrounding area came to see the boys and the pony that had been caught in the big tornado. They were all pointing and talking to each other. They had seen the survivors! They would be able to tell their families they had seen the famous boys and their pony.

Stephen and I did not really care for all the attention. We just wanted to get home to see our family.

The next day after having a good night's sleep and a filling breakfast we left for home. Pugsy was tired, but he continued to pull the little cart all day long. Along the side of the road there were people staring at us, and some were even cheering. It was as if we were heroes coming home from a war. This went on all day.

Toward late afternoon, we saw our town once again. We could see the townspeople on the street, and there were flags on the light poles. The school band was playing music.

We were heroes to these people. We did not know why they were doing this. We just felt lucky to be alive.

As we came into the town, people were waving at us and cheering for us. We smiled as we drove through the town, and then on to our house.

When we got home our family ran out to give us hugs and kisses. We were so thankful to be home.

Pugsy went right to his stall and fell asleep. Stephen and I had to tell our entire story before we could go to bed.

From that day until now, the story of how my brother and I, (Kurt and Stephen Williams) and our pony Pugsy, survived the storm of '98 has been told to every child by their parents. It is a story of how you never know what will happen to you when the next storm comes.

VOCABULARY (*Match the word its definition*)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. cart _____ | a. owner of an inn |
| 2. tornado _____ | b. strong spinning storm |
| 3. innkeeper _____ | c. pass out, unconscious, faint |
| 4. horrible _____ | d. go faster than something |
| 5. rut _____ | e. terrible, bad |
| 6. outrun _____ | f. bolted, secured |
| 7. locked _____ | g. pulled up |
| 8. black out _____ | h. small wagon |
| 9. sucked _____ | i. fun place, rollercoaster |
| 10. amusement ride _____ | j. low spot in a dirt road |

TRUE / FALSE

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Pugsy was a pony. | T / F |
| 2. Stephen was my brother. | T / F |
| 3. A typhoon took us away. | T / F |
| 4. The storm happened in the morning. | T / F |
| 5. I blacked out during the storm. | T / F |
| 6. We were riding in a big wagon. | T / F |
| 7. The innkeeper told us to go home. | T / F |
| 8. The storm happened in '89. | T / F |
| 9. The townspeople had a parade. | T / F |
| 10. Our parents were happy to see us. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Where we going when the storm came? _____
 - a) Swanson's house
 - b) home
 - c) Douglastown
 - d) Inn

2. How long did it take to get home after the storm? _____
 - a) 12 hours
 - b) all night
 - c) 2 days
 - d) a week

3. Why did the innkeeper give us a free room and food? _____
 - a) He would be able to tell our story for years to come.
 - b) He was friendly.
 - c) He had an extra room.
 - d) We gave him money.

4. Whose house was destroyed by the storm? _____
 - a) Svenson's
 - b) Swelton's
 - c) Swanson's
 - d) William's

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What was Kurt driving when the storm began?

2. What was the name of the pony?

3. What was Kurt's brother's name?

4. What kind of storm picked them up?

5. What was the name of the town they landed close to?

6. What is the name of their town?

7. Who told them that many people were looking for them?

8. Where did they sleep the night of the storm?

9. How did they get to their home?

10. What happened to the Swanson's house?
