

Chapter 1

“Advents!”

Mary Alberts jumped off the school bus as soon as the bus driver opened the door. Her brother Ronnie was right at her heels. Without even calling good-bye to anyone, they raced up the farm road to their house.

Waggy, the big collie, joined them at the edge of the yard, but Mary shoved him out of the way and ran up the steps to the kitchen door.

“Mamma! Mamma!” she called, even before she got the door open.

“Hello, children,” mother said, looking up from her bread making. “How-“

“Mamma, it was terrible!” said Mary. “They called us names,” said Ronnie. “I won’t ride the bus again,” said Mary. “I-” “Sit down and tell me what this is all about,” mother said. “Surely nothing is as bad as all that.”

Mary wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, leaving a streak of dirt across her cheek.

“It’s this way,” said Ronnie. “You know there was a fair at the school on Saturday-“

Mother nodded.

“And we didn’t go, ‘cause it was Sabbath,” said Ronnie. “Now this afternoon on the way home some of the kids from other rooms than ours-mostly fifth and sixth graders-began to tease us about it. They called us ‘Advents,’ and everything else they could think of.”

Mother sighed. “I wish you could go to a church school,” she said. “Then there wouldn’t be fairs on Sabbath that you couldn’t attend. But with church nearly forty miles away, we can’t send you to church school.”

“It’s mean of them to call us names,” said Mary angrily. “Anyway, I don’t see why we have to have a church name like ours. Maybe if our church didn’t say ‘Seventh-day’ they wouldn’t tease us about the Sabbath.”

“They’d still call us ‘Advents,’ though,” said Ronnie. “Mamma, what does ‘Advents’ mean? Why is our church called Seventh-day Adventist anyway? Why couldn’t we have some other name?”

“Our church name tells what we believe,” said mother. “Can you tell me what it means?”

THIS IS HOW IT HAPPENED

“Seventh-day means that the seventh day is the Sabbath,” said Mary.

“But what does ‘Adventist’ mean?” asked Ronnie.

“Would you like to have me tell you how our church got that name?” mother asked.

“Oh, yes,” said Mary. She pulled her chair up close to where her mother was kneading the bread.

Mother laughed. “Not right now. You two do your chores, and then we’ll have supper. At worship time daddy and I will tell you about it.”

Mary got up slowly. “All right,” she said, “but that’s a long time to wait.”

The youngsters changed from their school clothes to their work clothes and went out to the barn to do their chores. Mary gathered the eggs and fed the chickens while Ronnie helped drive the cows to the milking barn. There were so many things to do that it didn’t really seem long until they were in the living room for worship.

“I have a special song for us to sing tonight,” said mother. “It’s No. 664 in The Church Hymnal. This was one of the early songs of our church.”

Mary looked up the song. “It’s called an early advent hymn,” she said.

“That’s right,” said mother. “Its name is ‘Long Upon the Mountains,’ and it tells how the advent church is keeping the Ten Commandments and watching for Jesus to come.”

Mother played the song, and everyone sang.

Long upon the mountains, weary,
Have the scattered flock been torn;
Dark the desert paths, and dreary;
Grievous trials have they borne.
Now the gathering call is sounding,
Solemn in its warning voice;
Union, faith, and love, abounding,
Bid the little flock rejoice.

Now the light of truth they’re seeking,
In its onward track pursue;
All the Ten Commandments keeping,
They are holy, just, and true.

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On the words of life they're feeding,
Precious to their taste, so sweet;
All their Master's precepts heeding,
Bowing humbly at His feet.

In that world of light and beauty,
In that golden city fair,
Soon its pearly gates they'll enter,
And of all its glories share.
There, divine the soul's expansions,
Free from sin, and death, and pain;
Tears will never dim those mansions
Where the saints immortal reign.

Soon He comes! with clouds descending;
All His saints, entombed, arise;
The redeemed, in anthems blending,
Shout their victory through the skies.
O, we long for Thine appearing;
Come, O Saviour, quickly come!
Blessed hope! our spirits cheering,
Take Thy ransomed children home.

"I like this song," said Ronnie. "Let's sing it again some night. Now, mamma, you said you would tell us how our church got its name."