

And a Little Child Shall Lead Them

By M. Regina Cram

“Mom, Tiffany is a new girl at school. I’m being nice to her,” announced Meredith, our kind-hearted 10-year-old. So began a friendship we lived to regret.

Several months later Tiffany invited Meredith to her birthday party, along with 15 other children. Supervision was non-existent.

Shortly after the party began, Tiffany asked guests to gather for a movie.

“What’s it rated?” Meredith asked. It was rated R.

“I’m not allowed to watch R-rated movies,” Meredith stated. A boy sneered, “You’re actually going to obey your parents when they’re not here?” Meredith shrugged, then pulled a book from the shelf to occupy herself in another room.

A quiet girl said, “Meredith shouldn’t be alone; I’ll wait with her.” Another kid said the same thing. Then another.

They never showed the movie.

Next Tiffany announced a séance. “What’s a séance?” Meredith asked. A boy explained it meant conjuring dead spirits to communicate with them, sometimes for worship.

“Oh,” Meredith said. “I can’t do that because it breaks the commandment to worship God alone.” The boy rolled his eyes. Another kid whispered, “Cool! You know the commandments?”

The kids convinced Meredith that a séance didn’t involve worship, and besides, they were going to do it anyway. Not sure what to do, Meredith sat on the sidelines without participating.

Before long, lights flickered and candles seemed to extinguish on their own. Some boys locked a girl in a pitch-black garage, then repeatedly slammed the metal door with a baseball bat as the girl screamed in terror.

Several kids became hysterical. Someone suggested they pray the Lord's Prayer, which they did. Still terrified, they sought solace upstairs from Tiffany's mother.

Then they returned to the basement and resumed the séance.

. When Meredith told us what happened, we were furious. Surely the parents heard the screams. And what kind of parent allows an R-rated movie for children who, by law, can't watch it in theaters for another 7 years?

Terror set in at nightfall. Despite praying with Meredith, she had nightmares. By 4 a.m. she was in our bed, and even that did not chase away the fear.

The next day was Sunday. Before Mass, Meredith told our deacon about the party. He said he was proud of her, and God was proud that she stood up for her beliefs despite being mocked. He said he'd pray with her after she received Jesus in the Eucharist.

And he did. They knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament, the deacon's silver hair beside her blond wisps. He begged God to remove Meredith's nightmares and fear.

The nightmares eased, although she still slept in our bed for a week. At least 9 other children from the party were also having nightmares.

When I spoke with Tiffany's mother, she was unsympathetic. She thought the party was perfectly appropriate for elementary school children.

We are so proud of Meredith, who obeyed God, even when it meant standing alone.

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