A Gift of God

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GRANDPA lets go of my hand to reach in his pocket and pull out some money.

“Did you say fifty cents?”

Even though he can’t see, he knows the feel of money pretty well.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m going to name it.

“Sure is. Takes after Elsie, and Elsie always looked like me, so I reckon it will, too. Yeah, I thought I’d find some right pretty names with good meanin’s attached.”

He feels in his back pocket to drop his change in, then jingles it while he talks.

“Oh, no. No, but they probably want me to, bein’ the only grandfather and all. They’re probably expecting me to.”

The store-man smiles and hands Grandpa the book. Grandpa reaches for my hand. Then the store-man opens the door and we go out.

“Well, by crickety, I forgot about that jog in the step. Most clean knocked the book right out from under my arm.”

His hand holds on to mine a little more tightly. I slow down. When I slow down he knows we are at the curb.

“Here, Son, take this, and when we get across you can read some of them to me. Start at the beginnin’.”

I take the book and open it with my other hand. It’s a little hard to read because the sun gets through the trees and plays around on the page, but I know Grandpa wants to hear these. What if Mother already has a name picked out? Last night she and Daddy were talking, and they had one of the names they wanted already.

“Have you found the place?”

“Yes.”
I read and Grandpa listens, saying something about each one.

"That's a boy's name. Skip those."
"Yes, that was Emma's name. Well, I never knew that was what she meant."

We keep on till we get home. Then Grandpa sits down at the desk and I bring up a chair and sit at the side of the desk with him.

"Did you say, 'June'? I never did like a girl named after a month. You can skip those, too."
"Well, I swan! Will you read the meanin' of Elizabeth again, Son?"

I read it to him and he rubs his chin where his beard starts, and says it over after me, sort of excited-like.

"Elizabeth—Gift of God. Elizabeth—Gift of God. Put a pencil mark on that name, will you?"

The pencils in the desk are all gone; so I go upstairs to Mother's room.

"Well, what is it, big brother?"

I tell her and she frowns at me.

"Oh, dear. Of all things."

She says, "Oh, dear," again and kind of sighs. Then all of a sudden she smiles at me.

"I had a pencil here myself. Yes, here it is. You may take this down."

I go back down and mark the name. Grandpa is saying it over to himself; so I look at it some more in the book.

Dad comes in, goes upstairs, and stays a little while up there in Mama's room. Then pretty soon, there he is standing on the steps, looking down at Grandpa and me.

He says, "Father, can you come upstairs for a minute? Elsie would like to see you."

Grandpa knows the steps pretty well now. He used to always think there was still another step at the top, and he would come down heavy on just plain floor.

Mother says, "Father, we've been trying to name our new daughter and we thought perhaps you could help us out."
Helen is one name we'd like to use, but we want two. Could you suggest something?"

Grandpa turns in my direction, beaming and rubbing his hands together. His cheeks shine, and he looks all trembly, as if we had just given him a new 'bike' with balloon tires, a red tail light, and silver handlebars.

“Sure, Elsie, we have one already marked. Show it to her in the book, Son. I'd like to name her Elizabeth. It means 'Gift of God'.”

And Grandpa stands rubbing his hands together and changing from one foot to another, waiting to see if Mother likes it.

Then Mother reaches out, takes his hand, and pulls him closer to the bed. She says, "She's a gift to all of us, isn't she, Father? Would you like to call her Helen Elizabeth?"

And then while Grandpa nods, Mother takes his hand and lays it on our baby's head.