

The Little Red Wagon

by Forrest C. Gilmore

Once upon a time, there was a young boy about 10 years old. One of his prized possessions was a little red wagon that his parents gave him when he was six. He took it everywhere he went as he walked around his yard. He carried other toys around with it, and he used it as a race car in imaginary races. Sometimes, he even walked with it down the streets of the little town where he lived.

One day, as he looked at his little wagon, he realized that it was a bit tattered. The paint had been rubbed off in places, and some spots were rusty, so he got his dad to help him refinish it. They sanded off the rusty spots and gave it a fresh coat of shining red paint. That took a lot of work. Then he noticed that the wheels wobbled, and the handle was loose. The front axle was also bent from a large rock he hit some time ago. So he got a book that had information about wagons, and he learned all about them. He learned that wagons had four major parts: the body, the axles, the wheels, and the steering mechanism. He also learned about ball bearings, washers, and cotter pins. He straightened the axle, added some washers at the wheels, and oiled them. Now it rolled without squeaking. One day, he noticed the badly worn wheels, so he collected all the money he had and started toward town, pulling his shaky little wagon behind him.

Along the way, he encountered an old man with white hair. "Hi, Jimmy!" The man said. "Where are you going with your wagon?"

"I'm going to get some wheels," the boy replied. "How did you know my name?"

"I'm the mayor, the man replied. "I know everyone in this little town. In addition, my son owns the hardware store. You just go in there, and he'll take care of you."

So the little boy went into the hardware store. The owner greeted him with a smile. "What can I do for you," he asked.

"I need some wheels for my wagon," the boy replied. "How much do they cost?"

"Four wheels will cost ten dollars," the man answered.

"But I have only three dollars!" the boy exclaimed, with a sad look.

"No problem. Today I'll give you a brand new wagon," the man said. "Just go over there and pick out the one you want. Leave your old wagon here; I'll dispose of it for you."

"Oh, no!" the boy exclaimed. "I love my little wagon. I have had it a long time, and I've spent many hours fixing it! I think I'll just keep it. These wheels will last a while longer."

With that, the little boy stuffed his money into his pocket, turned and walked out of the store, pulling his wobbly little wagon behind him. The man stood there among the shiny new wagons. As he watched Jimmy walk away, he rubbed a tear from his eye.