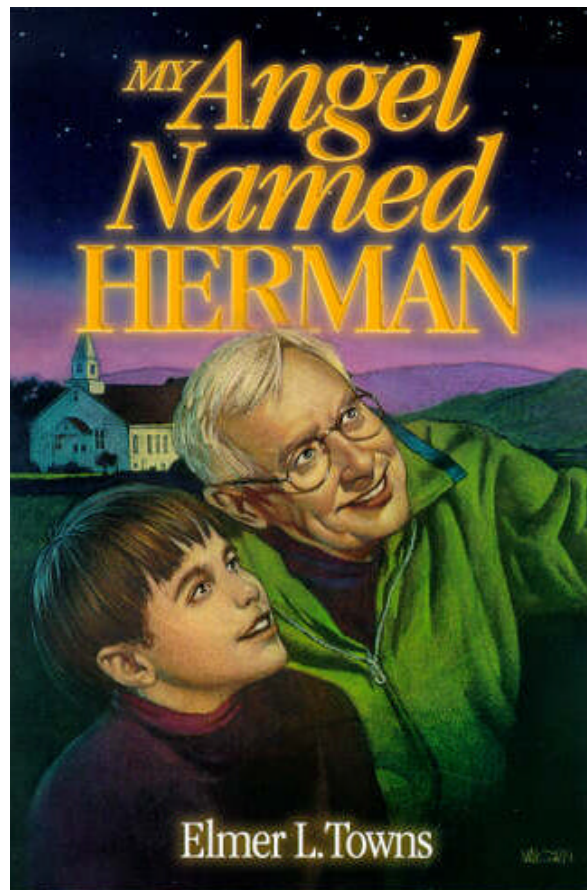




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My Angel Named Herman

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Nashville, TN

INTRODUCTION

Did you know that angels have been called stars?

In the last chapter of the Bible, the book of Revelation, the writer says, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20 KJV).

That doesn't mean that the stars you see in the sky are angels ... not at all. The stars you see on a dark night are really burning suns. They are millions of light-years away.

Angels are like people who think and feel and carry out orders. They have heavenly bodies, and sometimes they look like people you know. Angels do what God wants them to do, and at least one watches over you.

Both angels and stars shine-maybe that's why angels are called stars.

Some people have seen angels. That's why the Bible says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2 KJV).

That means you don't always know when you're talking to an angel.

See you around,

Herman

CHAPTER 1

Mom was late picking me up from soccer practice. The cold January wind blew faded yellow leaves across the empty soccer field. All the other soccer players were gone, and the coach was locking up the equipment. I zipped my jacket all the way up to the neck to stay warm. I wondered where Mom was. She seemed so busy, and kind of far away since she and Dad got the divorce. She had to work very hard and didn't have much time to talk. When she did get home, she just looked so tired ...

I tried not to bother her with my things, but I hoped she remembered to come soon. The streetlight flickered on in front of the church across from school. Looking up into a darkening sky, I saw a faint evening star.

"That star's called Venus." A voice coming out of the darkness startled me and I jumped. "And over there is Mercury." Whipping around I saw a grandfatherly man in a blue and green jacket. I had seen him before working around my school.

"I didn't mean to scare you," he said, his reassuring voice calming me. "I was out for my evening exercise when I saw you studying the stars." Then he stuck out a large, wrinkled hand.

I shook it and said, "My name is Jacob. I've seen you at school—you're the janitor. Aren't you?"

"Well, I keep an eye on things. Make sure they are taken care of—I have a lot of work to do around here . . . my name's Herman, by the way."

His hand was rough from hard work, but it was a friendly hand. He said he had seen me around the halls.

"Do you like to clean things?" I asked. "I hate to clean my room. I wouldn't want to clean up all day long!"

"Oh, I like it all right." He chuckled. "I look at my work as a special assignment from God. He gives us all certain talents for doing certain things and puts us in just the right place at just the right time to do the most good.

"I like stars, too," Herman said. He must have read my mind, because that was just what I'd been thinking. I felt good talking about the stars. I liked anyone who liked stars.

"What's the name of that star?" I pointed to a brilliant light shining through the bare limbs of a tree.

"That's not a star." He laughed. "That's the Moon."

"What's the difference between a star and the Moon?" I asked, testing him.

"Well . . ." He shuffled his tennis shoes and sat down beside me on the bench.

"A star is a light, like a fire burning at night . . . or like a light in the refrigerator."

"Oh . . ." I thought about the bright stars that shone in my window. They weren't bright enough to read by.

"The Moon doesn't have any light of its own. The Moon is like a round mirror . . . it just reflects light from the Sun."

"Is Earth a star?" I asked.

"No . . . Earth does not shine like the Sun . . . Earth just reflects light," said Herman. He went on to explain that the Sun is a gigantic fire that can be seen millions of miles away. Also, because it is a fire, its rays are warm.

I almost wished for some of those warm rays at that moment. I was chilly and Mom was late. But suddenly I didn't mind waiting as much. My new friend could talk to me about the stars. I wanted to impress him, so I said:

"Our planet is the biggest and best I liked to think everything I owned was the biggest and the best.

"No . . ." My new friend shook his head slowly from side to side. "Jupiter is eleven times bigger than Earth. It's the biggest planet in our solar system."

"How do ya know?"

"Oh . . . I've been around."

"Errr . . ." I didn't know what to say about that. I hoped he didn't feel bad about being old or something. "Then Jupiter is the biggest thing in our solar system?" I asked.

"No . . . Jupiter is only a planet. The Sun is a burning star, and it is thousands of times bigger than Jupiter."

"How do ya know?"

"I've been around, remember?"

"So what's the biggest thing of all?" Talking to Herman was like eating potato chips. I wanted to know more about the stars and the solar system every time he told me something new.

"The Sun is so big . . . so very big . . . that if it were hollow, 1.3 million Earths could fit inside it."

"Wow . . . !" That sounded big, but I really didn't know how big a million was. "Is the Sun the biggest thing there is?"

"Oh, no . . . not at all," he said.

"What's bigger?"

"There's a star named Betelgeuse in the Orion belt that, if it were hollow, could hold 90 million of our Suns."

"Wow . . ." My voice dropped in disbelief. I still didn't know how big a million was.

"And bigger than that . . ." Herman continued, "there is, in the constellation of Hercules, a star that could hold 100 million stars like Betelgeuse." He stopped to see if I were listening. I was. I'd never known anyone who knew so much about stars and planets!

Herman went on. "The largest known star is Mu Cephei, which could hold 422 million stars the size of the one in Hercules."

"That's BIG!" was all I could say.

Herman's laugh told me that he knew I was impressed.

"Where did all these stars come from?" I asked, curious to know. If there were some little boys sitting in space, staring at my planet—like I was staring at theirs—I wanted to know where they

came from.

"God made the stars." Herman formed his wrinkled hands into a circle as though he were making a snowball. "God's hands just shaped the stars, then He threw them into place."

"How do ya know?"

"Why, everybody knows He did it."

"Why did God make stars so big?"

"Because God is big . . . He's a big God," Herman said. "The universe is big . . . it has a lot of big stars . . . and big stars shine farther than little stars . . . big stars shine to the end of God's universe."

My curiosity was going 90 miles an hour. "How do ya know so much about stars?" I asked.

"All you have to do is look." He paused. "And you can see it all."

Then I saw the lights of Mom's station wagon bouncing down the rough lane to the soccer field. I waved good-bye to my new friend as I ran to meet Mom. Because I liked stars, I decided that I liked Herman, too. Then turning, I yelled one last question, "Will you tell me more about stars later on?"