

Visit the exciting Web site for kids at [www.cool2read.com](http://www.cool2read.com) and the Elizabeth Gail Web site at [www.elizabethgail.com](http://www.elizabethgail.com)

Copyright © 1981 by Word Spinners, Inc. All rights reserved.

Formerly titled *Elizabeth Gail and the Frightened Runaways*

Revised and updated in 2002 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph copyright © 2000 by Jim Whitmer. All rights reserved.

Designed by Beth Sparkman

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

ISBN 0-8423-4074-2, mass paper

Printed in the United States of America

09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS



1.	A Noise in the Barn . . . . .	1
2.	Piano Lesson . . . . .	9
3.	A Big Decision. . . . .	17
4.	Trouble . . . . .	25
5.	More Pain . . . . .	33
6.	Snoopy Susan . . . . .	45
7.	Ms. Kremeen . . . . .	55
8.	Double Trouble . . . . .	67
9.	Tattletale Toby . . . . .	79
10.	Discovery . . . . .	89
11.	A Talk in the Study . . . . .	99
12.	April and May . . . . .	109
13.	Morris and Evelyn Stern . . . . .	119
14.	Help . . . . .	127



## A Noise in the Barn

LIBBY gripped the wire handle of the red plastic bucket of grain as she slowly turned away from Snowball's stall. Had she heard a sneeze? First her heart seemed to stand still, then almost leap through her jacket. Would her real mother dare to sneak up on her and kidnap her so the Johnsons couldn't adopt her?

Snowball nickered and pawed the dirt floor of her stall. A barn cat mewed. Libby held her breath and cocked her head, listening intently. What was wrong with her? She had no reason to fear. Mother had signed the papers saying the Johnson family could adopt her. Mother had said she would never bother Libby or the Johnson family again.

Slowly, painfully, Libby released her breath and turned back to Snowball's stall. "I shouldn't be so jumpy, Snowball," Libby said as she poured the grain into the white filly's feed container. "Dad said we have nothing to fear. He said everything was going to be all right. I believe him, Snowball. He loves me! All the Johnson family love me even if I am only a welfare kid."

Libby rubbed her hand down Snowball's neck. "They won't change their minds, Snowball. I know they won't!" She hesitated and tried to stop the shiver that ran up and down her spine. "Will they? I just wish I could be good all the time! Then I wouldn't have anything to worry about."

Snowball lifted her head and nuzzled Libby's shoulder. "I love you, Snowball. I'm glad you belong to me."

With a smile Libby pushed her short brown hair out of her face and walked out of the stall. Suddenly she stopped, her hazel eyes wide. That had not been a cat sneezing! Someone was in the barn! Ben, Susan, Kevin, and Toby were all in the house watching Saturday morning cartoons. Chuck was in town at his store, and Vera was getting ready to go to town.

Who was in the barn? Should she run to the house to get Ben? He was always brave. She dare not stay out much longer. Vera would be waiting to take her to her piano lesson with Rachael Avery. And she would not miss her piano lesson!

“Who’s in here?” Libby’s voice sounded weak and scared. She’d meant it to come out loud and demanding. She cleared her throat and tried again. Oh, what if it were Mother?

With her back pressed against Snowball’s stall door, Libby looked around. Whoever was in the barn had to be hiding in one of the stalls. Or had she just imagined the sneeze because she was worried about Mother taking her?

She forced her legs to support her as she slowly walked down the concrete aisle of the barn. She stopped, her heart racing wildly, and stared at a stack of baled hay. Someone could be behind the hay. She had hidden there just last night when they’d played hide-and-seek after school. Kevin had finally given up and called her free.

Slowly Libby walked around the bales of hay and peeked down into her favorite hiding spot. She jumped back in surprise. Someone was hiding there! But it wasn’t Mother.

Libby wanted to run away screaming, but

she stood beside the hay and forced her body to stop shaking. “I see you! I see you in the hay. Come out right now!” She waited, poised for flight.

A girl just a little taller than Libby slowly crept from the hiding place and stood up. She had light brown hair and brown eyes. She stared at Libby as she rubbed her hands down her jeans, then stuffed them into the pockets of her green jacket. “Hi, Libby,” she said in a small voice.

“April?” Libby whispered in surprise, stepping back until she bumped against the wall. “April Brakie?”

The girl shook her head. “No. I’m May. April’s over there.”

Libby jerked her head around to see an identical-looking girl on the other side of the hay.

“Hi, Libby.” April grinned sheepishly as she walked around the hay and stopped beside Libby. “Are you mad?”

Libby stared at the twins, then slowly shook her head. “What are you doing here?”

“We came to find you,” said May urgently. “We need help.”

“We heard you’re going to be adopted,” said April.

“We said if Elizabeth Gail Dobbs can find herself a family, then maybe we can too.”

“You mean you ran away again?” Libby stared at the girls, remembering the first time she’d seen them. All three of them had lived with the Mason family for about four months. April and May looked so much alike and had dressed exactly alike so that no one could tell them apart. Mrs. Mason had beat them both for any wrongdoing in order to make sure that the offender had been punished.

April sneezed, then wiped the back of her hand across her nose. She looked pale and too thin, thinner than May. “We had to get away, Libby. We couldn’t stay there.”

“We heard Mrs. Blevins talking about you,” said May with a giggle. “She said a wonderful family was adopting you. We said if Libby can do it, we can too. We came to meet your family and see if they’d take us.”

“Oh! Oh, dear!” Libby shook her head. “I don’t know. I don’t know what they’d say if they knew you had run away. Who were you living with?” She saw the hard look on April’s face and the fear in May’s eyes. “Tell me, girls.”

April nervously pushed her long brown hair

back from her thin pale face. “Remember Morris and Evelyn Stern?”

Libby’s stomach tightened into a hard knot, and the barn seemed to spin. “No, I don’t remember them.”

“Yes you do, Elizabeth Gail Dobbs!” cried May, catching Libby’s icy hand in hers and squeezing it. “You remember living with them.”

“No!” She pushed the memory back and would not let it out. “No!”

April shrugged. “If that’s the way you want it, then that’s the way it’ll be.”

“You must remember, Libby,” cried May in alarm. “Then you’ll know how much we need you to help us or hide us or something! We can’t go back to them! We can’t!”

Libby jerked free and turned to run from the barn, but May grabbed her again and knocked her into the corner of the stall, where she struck her arm. Pain shot through her and she cried out.

“Don’t hurt her, May,” said April sharply. “She’ll help us. I know she will.”

“Will you, Libby?” May’s voice was low and soft and pleading, and Libby wanted to shout no! “Please, Libby.”

Slowly Libby stood up, holding her throb-

bing right arm protectively. "I'll think about it. I have to go to town right now. When I get back, I'll tell you my answer."

May's thin hand reached out pleadingly. "You won't tell on us, will you?"

Libby shook her head, glad that she could help erase the fear from May's eyes. "I promise not to tell. You girls stay hidden in here. I'll be home by noon, and I'll bring you something to eat."

"Thanks, Libby," said April, wrapping her arms around herself and hunching her thin shoulders. Pieces of hay clung to her hair. Dark circles around her eyes made them look large in her pale face.

Libby wanted to take both girls into the house and ask Vera to mother them and give them a home forever. Finally she turned away and walked out of the barn into the cool September air.

She lifted her pointed chin and squared her shoulders. Goosy Poosy honked from the chicken pen. Rex barked a short, sharp bark and ran to Libby's side. She rested her hand on his head, then cried out in pain. Gingerly she rubbed her arm.

Determinedly she ran to the back door of the house. She would not think about her arm

or the Brakie twins right now. She had to go to her piano lesson with Rachael Avery.

She opened the door and stepped inside, leaning weakly against the closed door. She would *not* remember Morris and Evelyn Stern!