

Middle School Winner
Untitled
Story by Kelsi Collins
Grade 8

“Is she coming to?”

“Don’t scare her...”

Wincing, Moxi forced her eyes open. The first thing she noticed was that she was on something soft—it almost felt like a real bed. Then she noticed the people by her side.

“Who are you?” she quavered, disgusted with herself for sounding so scared.

“I’m Kisha, and this is Gregg,” answered the woman.

“Nice to meet you,” replied Moxi sarcastically. “Where am I?”

The man hesitated. “Can you remember the King?”

The question stopped Moxi cold. This city had been ruled by a King and his Son, the Prince. But a long time ago, they had both left. When they departed, the King gave his promise that they would be back for their kingdom. But after ten years, people forget that kind of thing.

The ruling had been taken over by Pharis and Hypocris, two officials. They weren’t like the King or the Prince at all. They didn’t care about the Middlelevel or the Lowerlevel, just the Upperlevel and the people who lived there. The Middlelevel became a lowlife, trashed place, while all the Lowerlevel was good for was mining.

The Middlelevel was where Moxi lived—until now. She had been combing the trash piles, as always, when she heard the crunching of tires. A car down there could only mean one of two things—a childcop, looking for orphaned children to send to the workhouses; or an Overseer, looking for orphaned children to send to the mines.

Someone had grabbed her arm and told her to run, and she had—blindly through her fear.

The person pulling her arm had led her through alleyways, until they reached an open spot. In the opening was a car! Moxi had tried to get away, but the person just picked her up and placed her in a seat. Her terror had been so great, she had fainted. The she had woken up, in this strange place, with strange people asking her strange questions.

“Yeah, I remember,” she answered sullenly.

“Well...he’s coming back!” Kisha cried. “Before you object,” she went on, “here’s the proof. He sent us this letter, explaining it. He tells us how we should live in his absence, and lets us know what will happen when he returns.” She pulled out a thick letter that looked more like a book.

“So what does that have to do with me? He doesn’t care about me. You guys are from the Upper level, and I’m just a Middlelevel orphan-“

“No!” shouted Gregg. “He cares about everyone: poor or rich, weak or strong. It’s all here in the letter.”

“Really?” Moxi’s interest was piqued.

“And about you...” continued Kisha. “Well, we could use your help. The King wants us to get an army ready with people who love him and want to help reclaim the kingdom.”

For the next ten minutes, Kisha and Gregg outlined their plan. They wanted Moxi to attend a school in the Upperlevel, to minister to the kids there. The mention of the King

was forbidden up there, but “children are one of the biggest influences”, they told her. “New adults in the school would raise suspicion, but a new student...”

“What makes you think I’ll help?”

The two adults exchanged glances. “We aren’t telling you what to do. We’re just asking.”

“And if I don’t, you’ll throw me back into the Middlelevel, right?”

They looked at her tenderly. “We would never do that. If you don’t want to help, we’ll take you in. We just thought...like all the other kids we picked up, some wanted to help, and some didn’t. It’s your choice. You’ll be taken care of either way.”

Moxi didn’t know what to say. These people were actually being nice to her...they seemed sincere.

Seeing her indecision, Kisha smiled. “How about you get cleaned up? It’ll make you feel better.”

Kisha showed her a huge bathroom and helped her into a shower.

As the water ran over her skin, Moxi considered what she had been told. She did remember the King; how loving and gentle he was with his people. He and his Son really had cared about everyone.

If they did, why did they leave? A hissing voice asked her. And besides, a King like that, only the rich people would be in his army. You’ve done lots of bad things in your life.

Why would such a perfect King allow trash like you in his new kingdom?

A soft light seemed to glow in her mind. “Because he loves me...” Moxi whispered as an answer to her own question.

The glow turned into a bright sun. “He does love me! And he’s coming back—not just for the Upperlevel people, but for everyone!” She couldn’t believe how blind she had been.

As fast as she could Moxi finished her shower and got changed. It felt like she was getting rid of much more than just her old, grimy clothes—it felt like she was shedding her old, grimy life: all the pain, sorrow, and uncertainty. A new purpose warmed her heart as she marched out of the bathroom. She would help these people with their army. Moxi understood now that her job was important—she would be telling those kids, the ones most likely to listen, about the King’s return.

Kisha and Gregg hugged her when she announced her news. Then Kisha told her, “No one knows when the King and his Son will return. So all we can do is be ready and vigilant, waiting for that day. Other people need to know! When the King comes, we will be held responsible for the army waiting for him.”

This story does have a happy ending, but not for a while. A few more years pass with no sign of the King. In this time, all believers are mocked and persecuted. But they stay patient and keep ministering quietly. When the King and his Son do return, these people are rewarded, and the kingdom is theirs!