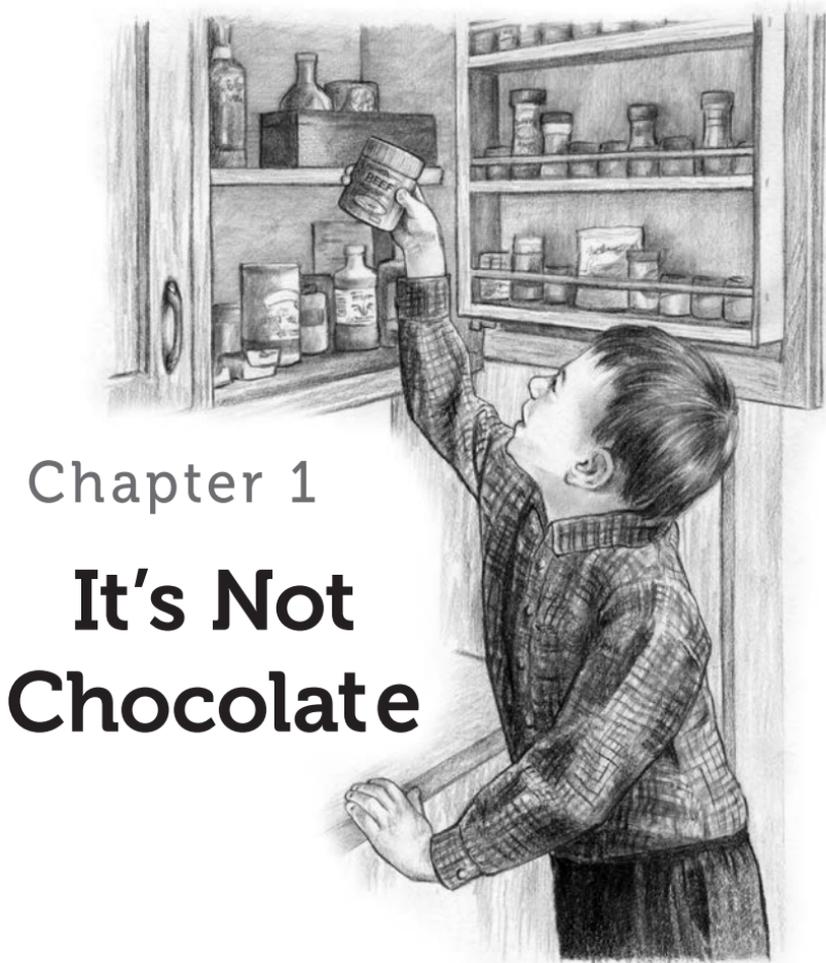


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Chapter 1

It's Not Chocolate

“**W**hat are you doing?” Dennis asked. He climbed up on a chair beside Mama at the kitchen sink.

“I’m making beef stew for supper,” Mama said as she chopped a raw potato.

Dennis looked into the slow cooker. “What’s in there?” he asked.

“Meat, celery, carrots, onions, and potatoes,” Mama answered. “You can put these pieces of potato in too.”

Dennis dropped the pieces in while Mama peeled another potato. He watched as she added green beans and tomato juice.

“Now I’ll stir it all together so it can start cooking,” Mama said.

“I want to stir it,” Dennis said.

“You can try,” Mama said, giving him a big spoon. “Reach all the way to the bottom and turn it over.”

Mama opened the cupboard and got a little jar. She pulled out a small square wrapped in red paper.

“What’s that?” Dennis asked, watching as Mama unwrapped the square. It was brown and looked like chocolate.

“Beef bouillon,” Mama said, putting the square in a cup of hot water.

“Can I have one?” Dennis asked.

“No,” Mama said. “It’s not good to eat.”

“Then why are you putting it in the food?” Dennis asked as he watched Mama pour the cup of bouillon into the stew.

“It’s good when it’s mixed with other things, but it’s not good by itself. You wouldn’t like it,” Mama said. She took the big spoon from Dennis and mixed everything together.

"There!" Mama said as she put the lid on the slow cooker. "Now supper can take care of itself while I do other things."

Dennis watched Mama put the jar of little squares back in the cupboard. He still thought they looked like chocolate. *She just doesn't want me to have one*, he thought.

The more Dennis thought about those little squares, the more he wanted one. When Mama took the garbage outside, Dennis quickly opened the cupboard and got one of the little squares. He ran to the bathroom and closed the door.

Mama will never know, he thought as he unwrapped the little brown square and popped it into his mouth.

Yuck! Dennis thought as soon as he chewed the square. *That tastes awful. It's not like chocolate!* He spit the brown pieces into the washbowl and quickly got a glass of water. He was still rinsing his mouth and spitting when Mama opened the door.

"What's—" Mama began and stopped. "Ah, you sneaked a bouillon cube," she said when she spied the red wrapper lying beside the washbowl.

Dennis's guilty eyes looked up at Mama.

"Was it good?" Mama asked. Her eyes twinkled back at him.

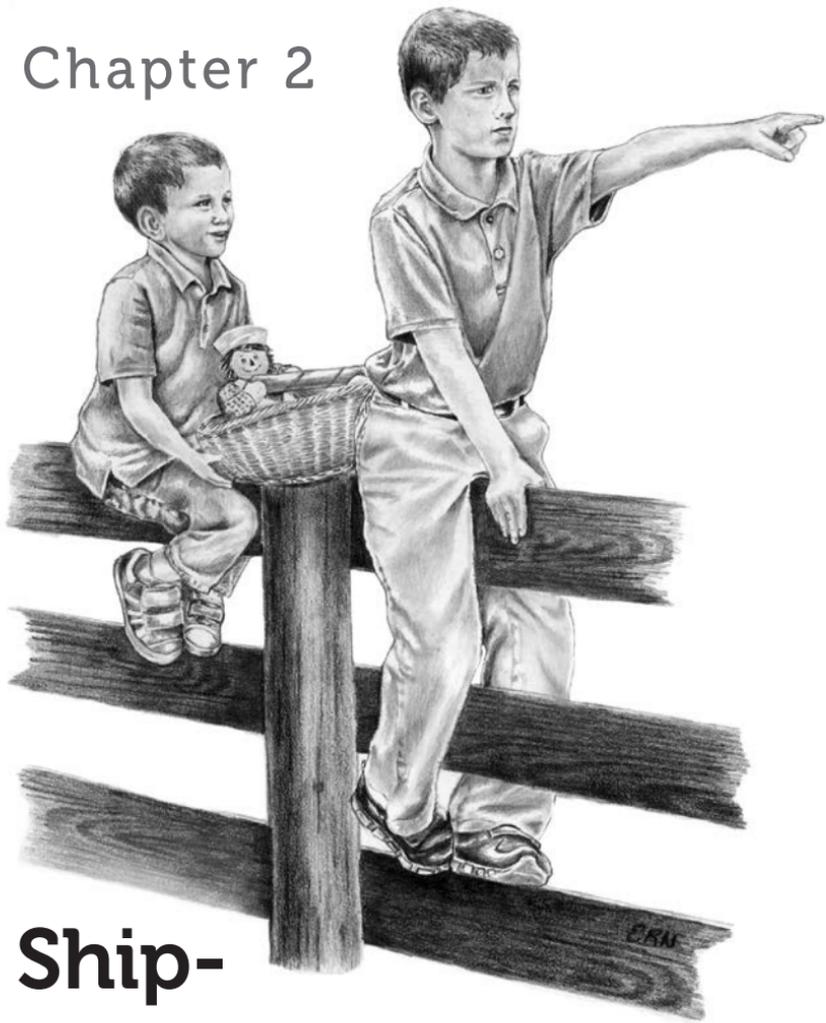
"No," Dennis said as he rinsed his mouth again.

“I told you it isn’t good by itself,” Mama said. “Do you believe me now?”

“Yes,” Dennis answered. “It looked like chocolate, but it’s not.”

“Well, you learned the hard way,” Mama said. “People who don’t believe their parents or God get into a lot of trouble. Remember this the next time you’re tempted to do something you were told isn’t good for you.”

Chapter 2



Ship- wrecked!

“Let’s play shipwreck,” Steve said to his little brother one hot summer day.

“Okay,” Gene agreed. He was younger than Steve and usually ready to do whatever Steve suggested.