

# A TRIAL BY WATER

by Lowell J. Stevens

It was a hot summer day, about three years ago. I was twelve, and working with my Dad while he cleaned windows for his business, Sonlight Window Cleaning. Or rather, he was cleaning windows; I was mostly getting in the way.

He had given me a tool called a strip washer, a towel and a hose borrowed from the customer's house. It was one of the fireman hoses, the ones that fold flat with the cheery yellow nozzle at the end. I was to rinse the screen, scrub it, wipe down the edges and rinse it again.

I began to get into the groove of working quite easily. Hose them down, scrub, wipe edges, rinse, and repeat. I was really starting to get into it when instead of taking the time to hook the nozzle of the hose over the horizontal strut of my ladder; I started to toss it onto the grass.

It was about the fourth time that I had tossed the hose down when I heard a small, precise crack. I froze, and then turned back. The nozzle had landed on the driveway. At first glance it looked all right, but when I picked it up I noticed that the little piece of plastic that held the spring capsule on had broken off. The handle was useless. It wouldn't spray.

Instantly the cold claw of deception gripped my heart. "It was old." The devil told me. "Plastic gets brittle. She'll never pin it on you." I was torn internally. I had been saving my money for a Game Boy Advance, and was still about thirty dollars shy. Spending the money to buy a twenty-dollar hose would put me back so far I would need a telescope to see my target. My birthday was still a month away.

I stared at it for a long moment. It wasn't useable, but it wasn't very noticeable. Maybe the lady would think that the sun had cracked it. Maybe she would think that she had dropped it. Maybe...

As my brain frantically wracked itself trying to find a solution, my conscience fought back. "It's not right." It said. "Tell the truth."

At that precise moment my Dad came around the corner, seeing me standing there.

"Why aren't you working?" He had asked me.

Several possible answers flashed before my eyes, none of them true. I managed to choke out "I broke the hose, Dad." Negative dollar signs floating before my eyes. In retrospect, that sentence was extremely hard to say. But as soon as I said it, I felt an incredible amount of release. The guilt flooded away, leaving me feeling relieved.

I ended up having to pay for the hose, but I learned a valuable lesson. If I had lied about

it, I would have been haunted by guilt for a long time. Furthermore, it helped me to establish a habit of honesty, even when honesty hurt.

Even now, years afterward, when I am faced by a difficult decision that requires either the compromising of my honesty, or lying to protect myself, I think back on that incident and remember what had almost happened. If I had lied, for months afterward I would have been guilty, and the money that I had earned that day would have tainted with the realization that it wasn't mine, and my enjoyment of what I bought with it would have been destroyed.

Honesty is one of those things that is getting more and more compromised by the culture today. Peers, radio shows, movies and books all condone lying and dishonesty, saying that it doesn't matter, it is a natural human reaction. That is true, but it is a natural human reaction that should be suppressed, not encouraged. It came from the fall of Adam, and now dishonesty, the Devil's candy stick, has reared its head in everyone's lives. It is extremely difficult to overcome, but God said that he would never allow us to be tempted beyond what we could bear. God has provided a way out of every situation; we just need to look for it. It is the looking for it that is the hard part.