Mrs. Powers

Red = characterization with thoughts and feelings

Blue = physical characterization

Language Arts

September 17, 2015

**A Puff of Smoke**

I took ten long, slow, deep breaths. *I feel ready to pull my hair out . . . again. I know I’ve always dreamed about being a mom, but caring for someone else 24/7 is so much more difficult than I’d imagined. I am just plain exhausted, and I just want . . . no, need a few moments to myself. Life is too hard. In fact, I never even have time to spend with other adults. Heck, I have to walk to the hardware store each day to talk to the cashier or I’d never see anyone my age. Ugh! Who am I kidding! I not only do not have time with adults, I don’t have time to take a shower. It’s a sad little life I lead right now. Maybe when Ben grows older I’ll have some time. Yeah! I just have to get through the next few years. Years? Even getting through the next few days seems interminable. I must pull myself together.* I could feel my eyebrows knit together, my eyes narrowed, and my nose wrinkled with the anxiety that was flooding through me. *I have to relax,* I commanded myself. I glanced over at my husband.

“How’s the salad coming?” I smiled at my husband as I fried the chicken for dinner. We were hanging out, relaxed on this bright and sunny evening in mid-August. Baby Ben was still down for his nap, and we had a few minutes to ourselves. Ever since we’d had the baby, these moments were few and far between. We tried to enjoy every minute of peace we could find. We loved being parents though, and we thought we’d have plenty of time in the future to enjoy carefree times like this one.

Ron smiled back at me as he chopped the lettuce and other veggies for the salad. As I looked back at him, I saw him jerk toward the window.

“What’s that noise?” he asked, and without giving me a chance to respond, he yelled, “It sounds like a plane is coming down.” He was out the door before he even finished his sentence.

I quickly grabbed the chicken from the hot burner, moved it to a cool one, and ran after him into our tiny backyard. By now, I had heard the sound too, I looked up to see the sun glinting off of the metallic wings as the plane spiraled downward like a ballerina twirling on pointe -- a tiny twin-engine Cessna was spinning out of control. It seemed to be heading right for us. I stood stock still, my mouth agape, my eyebrows raised, my eyes wide. I could feel the color drain from my face. My stomach felt like a lead balloon.

Spots formed before my eyes as I stared toward the sun. Closing my eyes, the sounds of disaster filled my ears. The engine rumbled erratically. The wind shrieked as the plane tunneled downward so quickly. The propeller, set in motion only by the force of air caused by the plane’s rapid descent, clanged against the casing. These terrifying sounds sent shivers of fear up and down my spine. My heart pounded in my chest. My cheeks were moist with tears.

Ron’s normally peaceful brown eyes showed panic. He looked at me. He looked up at the plane. “It’s coming down. It’s out of control. It’s going to crash!” Each sentence was louder and more panicked than the last.

Ron ran toward the house, then turned and ran toward the back gate. “It’s going down!” he yelled again.

He was out the gate and down the block just as we heard the crash. Then came the explosion – loud and endless it roared. Over the trees I could see a plume of fire explode into the calm, blue sky. **A puff of smoke** spread until it covered the light of the sun. The acrid smell of burning rubber filled the air.

For several minutes I heard nothing. I don’t think I was even breathing. Silence reigned. The smoke cleared as quickly as it had appeared, and the sun shone, and the beautiful afternoon continued as if nothing had happened.

*What had just happened? Where was my husband?* The time seemed endless. I began to shake. My knees trembled. As I struggled to bring myself under control, I saw a small figure heading back from the site of the accident. Ron slowly trudged back into the yard. He was looking at the ground shaking his head back and forth.

“There’s nothing left,” he murmured quietly, almost under his breath. “There’s nothing left.”

“What do you mean?” I shrieked. A sense of panic rose within me.

Ron looked up as if he’d forgotten that I was there. “The plane is gone. It blew up just as I rounded the corner. I didn’t know what to do. I just kept thinking, *What am* ***I*** *going to do? What if I find a body part or something?*” he choked as a sob erupted from his throat. “There’s nothing left. The plane is gone, and the house it hit is gone. There’s just a big hole in the ground. It was incredible.”

“What?” I squealed, my voice failing me. “What do you mean – gone?”

“I mean the plane crashed before I got there, but the fireball erupted just as I arrived. It took the plane and the house. Wiped it all out. Nothing is there. It’s all gone.” Keeping his eyes down, he just kept shaking his head as tears fell to the ground.

I grabbed his hand; it trembled beneath mine. I hugged him for a long time; then I led him back into the house, back to our baby and our safety, away from the death and destruction that he’d just witnessed. I thought back to the bible verse I’d read that morning: *You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are* ***a puff of smoke*** *that appears for a short time and then vanishes.* (James 4:14) I’d never thought that was true before. I’d thought we’d have forever.

As we sat down to dinner that night, I realized that was exactly what the people in the house had been doing when they were wiped from this earth. Today was their day. Job 14:5 says *A man’s days are numbered. You know the number of his months. He cannot live longer than the time You have set.* That was sure the case here; not even the safety of their own house at dinner time could save them.

With this revelation, I decided to live each day as if it were my last, treasure each moment as precious, value each person as a gift, and look forward to my eternal life to come.