



Text Version of Audio Story: Bobby

It was becoming a familiar trip for eight-year-old Bobby. His sister Katie had been sending him to Kipp's market, a little country store there in McAlisterville, every month or two now, for the last couple of years.

He was always instructed to hand Mr. Kipp a note and bring a bag back unopened.

He meandered along on his way back home, kicking a Mountain Dew can and thinking about his Uncle Harmond and Aunt Gladys, who would be visiting from Arizona. He had seen pictures but could hardly remember the uncle that his brothers and sisters had dubbed, their favorite. His mom and dad had left earlier in the morning to pick them up at the airport.

I guess it was about in front of the post office where Bobby dropped the brown paper bag intended for Katie. A box fell out.

Bobby recognized that he had seen a box just like it in the bathroom closet. He opened it and pulled one of the strange-looking items out. He gazed upon it with amazement, trying to figure its purpose.

He continued to walk to the house and went inside — this time with some questions, "*Hey Katie, what are these?*"

"You're not old enough to know. Now, Bobby, give them here!"

"Well, I'm old enough to get them at the store. I think that makes me old enough to know what they are, don't you think?"

"Oh, Bobby, they're just napkins. Now, give 'em here."

"Well, if they're just napkins, you know. Why don't you keep them in the kitchen, you know, instead at the bathroom closet?"

"Because, they're for a special occasion, and I'm just hiding them in there until then!"

"Oh... okay. Cool. "

Bobby went out to the back porch and played with a Richard Petty Matchbox car. He continued to think about his Uncle Harmond. It would hardly be appropriate for Harmond to be his favorite uncle, if Bobby couldn't be his favorite nephew. He needed to make that *good* first impression.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is when the idea hit him.

The favorite uncle candidate coming the whole way from Arizona. ...

The big Pennsylvania Dutch homecoming dinner that his mother had fretted about being just right. ...

The idea was now turning into a plan and was coming together with such clarity in Bobby's mind that it seemed to be just what Pastor Kurfman had talked about on Sunday. It seemed to be one of those messages. A message straight from God Almighty Himself, and it seemed God was saying to Bobby, "*Bobby, this is a special occasion.*"

The old Buick pulled back in from its long trip to the airport. Bobby could hardly wait to show off the table that he had set in such grand and regal style.

Ah, his poor mother, she had to excuse herself; and Aunt Gladys tried to comfort her as she ingested one, or two, or eight, maybe, of those nerve pills that ol' Doc Yoder had given her for the episodes of panic and anxiety that she often experienced in moments like this.

And while the ladies were out of the room attending to their upset, Harmond, a professional photographer, seized the moment and captured the real-life Norman Rockwell-type of photo that camerabugs like him dream their whole life of stumbling across. Bobby posed for his uncle's camera, beside one of his special-occasion settings.

Today, that award-winning photo, blown up to life-size, hangs in a den studio in the suburbs of Tucson, Arizona — where an elderly man laughs as he entertains all who come to visit with the very, very true story of that special occasion, and his first impression of his all-time favorite nephew, from back East in Juniata County.

Broadcasting from the Juniata Valley, I'm the American Storyteller.