

# Penny's Present

By Margo Atkinson

The sun was shining when Penny woke up. Usually she hopped out of bed with a happy smile for the new day. But today she just lay there frowning. This was the day before Mother's Day, and Penny still had no present for Mama. She had forgotten about Mother's Day until she had heard her brother and sister talking last night. "I made Mama an apron in sewing class," Elizabeth had said proudly. "What are you going to give Mama?" Peter asked Penny. Penny had not answered. She had ducked her head and run to her room, ashamed to admit that she had spent her allowance. She had nothing at all to give Mama on her special day. Penny got out of bed and dressed slowly. The bag of jelly beans she had bought yesterday reminded her of her terrible mistake.

"Well, here's our littlest sleepyhead," Mama said as Penny walked into the kitchen. She gave her a good-morning hug, and the smell of cinnamon and baked apples floated up from her apron. In a way, that made Penny feel worse because it reminded her of all the good things Mama did for her. She remembered a hot day last summer when Mama had spent a whole afternoon making strawberry jam, because she knew Penny liked it. She thought about the beautiful pink dress that Mama had made for her to wear on Easter. Mama always had time to listen whenever something was troubling Penny. But Mama couldn't help her today. This was one time she'd have to figure out an answer for herself. "Penny dear, can you eat a little faster?" Mama was talking to her. With surprise Penny

noticed that everyone else had finished breakfast. "I'm sorry, Mama. I was thinking." "Well, finish up. I have to visit old Mrs. Logan today, and go to a Red Cross meeting this afternoon. But first, I want to get this kitchen cleaned up." Penny ate her oatmeal as she watched her mother bustle about the kitchen. Mama was a very busy person. It seemed to Penny that sometimes Mama could use an extra pair of hands and two more feet. Suddenly she had an idea! There was a present she could give Mama, and it might be better than anything she could buy.

The next morning Penny was at the breakfast table bright and early. Elizabeth brought in a coffee cake she had baked for a surprise. Everyone said, "Happy Mother's Day, Mama!" "Oh!" Mama exclaimed. "What a beautiful cake. And presents for me, too. What a lovely surprise!" Penny waited until the other presents were unwrapped before she gave Mama her gift. "Mama, I couldn't buy you anything, but I made you something instead," Penny said. "I hope you like it." Mama smiled as she opened the package. "My, how pretty," she said, as she uncovered a small red flowerpot that held a large-petaled cardboard daisy. In the center of the flower Penny had printed "For Mother with love."

"Read the petals of the Promise Posy, Mama," Penny said, hopping with excitement. Mama picked up the flower and read: "Wash the flowerpot saucers"; "Read to Mrs. Logan"; "Cut fresh flowers and arrange them"; "Polish Mama's shoes"; "Make labels for jam jars"; "Dust my room." "Penny," Mama said at last. "This is a really lovely present." Penny sighed with relief. "All I could give you was me," she said as she

hugged Mama. "That's the best part," Mama said as she hugged Penny back.