

## CHAPTER 1

### Mr. Dewey Meets Julius

“Mom,” Mitch Sinclair called, “Mr. Dewey’s coming over to talk to me tonight about a Sabbath School class hike, OK?”

Mom, in her bedroom changing, yelled through the door. “Sure,” she called, “we’ll just have to come home early.” Her sister, Maxie, and Maxie’s husband, Lloyd, had invited Mom and Mitch over for Sabbath lunch. Mitch’s cousin Cassie and he always had fun together.

“Sure,” Julius, Mitch’s parrot, mimicked in exactly the same muffled voice Mitch had heard coming through the door. “Sure. Sure. Sure.”

Mitch laughed. “Did she really sound that bad?” he asked.

Mitch’s best friend, Julius, extra large for a parrot, wore neon green feathers with a flaming red head and yellow cheeks. Only when he flew did he display the peacock blue feathers in his wings. Uncle Daryl had given the bird to Mitch about six months ago, when he got transferred to Baltimore, Maryland. Ever since then, Julius had been getting Mitch either into or out of trouble.

“Mom, can we take Julius to Cassie’s?”

Mom came out of her bedroom, looking happy. “I don’t remember them inviting Julius.” She grinned at Mitch. “I guess you want Maxie to have a scalloped dining-room table like ours,” she said. The first night they had had Julius, he had chewed the edge off Mom’s new walnut table; he had

## JULIUS AGAIN

chewed up a lampshade the same night. Not a good start. But he did better now that he knew Mom and Mitch.

Julius stayed home, and Mom and Mitch returned right after sunset so they wouldn't miss Mr. Dewey.

Mitch and Mom had barely finished studying the Sabbath School lesson when the doorbell rang. Mitch answered the door.

After inviting the man in, he turned to Mom. "This is my teacher, Mr. Dewey. Mr. Dewey, my mom."

The two spoke; then Mom asked Mr. Dewey about the hike.

"We're climbing Gobbler's Knob," he said. "Really, just -"

The loudly ringing doorbell interrupted. Neither Mom nor Mitch made any move toward the door. After several rings, Mr. Dewey asked. "Aren't you going to see who's there?"

Mitch and Mom giggled. "We already know," Mitch said.

A strange look crossed Mr. Dewey's face, as if he couldn't believe anyone not answering the door. "You aren't going to open it, then?"

Mitch laughed again. "That's right, Mr. Dewey, we're not."

"It's not like you think," Mom said, giggling. "We're really not that rude. Did you notice that bird sitting on the back of the chair over there? That's who's at the door. He's a copycat. Ringing the doorbell is one of his acts. He's also a telephone, and he copies perfectly the voice of anyone who interests him."

## JULIUS AGAIN

Mr. Dewey brightened. “Hey, that’s quite a pet, Mitch. I hadn’t heard about him.” He got up and eased toward the parrot. “Let me get a look at this big guy.”

Suddenly, Mitch got worried. Julius had really chewed Mitch’s arms up when he first came to live with Mitch. “Uh - you’d better not do that,” he said. Just as he said it, Julius hopped to the top of Mr. Dewey’s head. He didn’t bite or scratch but just sat grasping the man’s hair with his claws. His bright head stuck way out, his face pointing at the man’s. Julius didn’t miss a move Mr. Dewey made.

“Am I in danger?” Mr. Dewey asked.

“I don’t think so,” Mitch said. “I’ll get a date from the kitchen.” A moment later he handed Mr. Dewey the small fruit. “Hold your arm out so he can sit on it while he eats,” Mitch said. Two seconds later Julius sat on Mr. Dewey’s forearm, crunching one of his favorite treats.

“He’s a neat bird,” Mr. Dewey said. “Why don’t you bring him to Sabbath School?”

Mom laughed that time. “He already did,” she said. “I guess you weren’t around yet. Julius flew into the top of the church and sang louder than the congregation. Then he flew down and snatched Pastor Arden’s glasses, took them up, and sawed them in two.” She giggled as she remembered. “I don’t think Julius would be welcome at church anymore.”

“He’s welcome in my Sabbath School class.”

Just then, Julius flew to Mitch’s shoulder. Scooting toward Mitch’s face, he leaned against his cheek. “Kkkkk, kkkk, kkkk” he said. Then he tweaked Mitch’s lips.

“Did he bite you?” Mr. Dewey asked.

## JULIUS AGAIN

Mitch shook his head. “No, he kissed me. He thinks I’m his mother.”

“That’s not what the book says,” Mom said. “Julius thinks Mitch is his wife. Parrots love their mates a lot and transfer that love to their keeper, if the keeper is good to them.”

Julius kept whispering into Mitch’s ear and kissing him. “Julius is tired,” Mitch soon said. “Say good night, Julius.”

“Good night, Julius,” the bird repeated in an exact imitation of Mitch’s voice. Mitch took the parrot into his bedroom and opened the door of the big cage in the corner of the room. The bird hopped in, and Mitch locked the door. Then he wound up a small piece of wire around the door to keep Julius from leaving while he and Mom slept.

When Mitch returned, Mr. Dewey and Mom each sipped a cup of cranberry tea. “Shall we get busy on the hike stuff?” Mitch asked.

Mr. Dewey grinned and set his mug on the kitchen table. “Your mom and I just got it all figured out,” he said. “We’ll take along a camp stove and make burgers. We’ll have picnic beans and potato salad. She even offered to make the potato salad. Eggless. Does that sound good, Mitch?”

“Yes. What else can we have?”

“How about watermelon?” Mom asked.

“Just the thing,” Mr. Dewey said. After visiting for some time, he got up. “Well, this has been my best evening for over a year, but I better go before you put me in a cage and hang a blanket over it.” As he talked he reached into his shirt pocket, then the other one, then several pockets in his pants. “Hey, I seem to have misplaced my pen.”

## JULIUS AGAIN

Mitch's stomach felt strange. "Was it bright and shiny?" he asked.

"Yes, silver and red. I got it for my birthday, and I better not lose it."

"We'll keep an eye out for it," Mom said.

"I really enjoyed meeting you, Fay," Mr. Dewey said. "After all the help, you'll go on the hike, won't you?"

"It's been fun meeting you too, Dan," Mom said. "And I'd love to go. Thanks."

Mr. Dewey left, and Mom turned to Mitch with sparkling eyes. "Hey, you didn't mention your Mr. Dewey was young, handsome, and nice," she said in an extra-happy voice.

"He's nice, but he isn't young."

Mom laughed. "He's young to me," she said. "Is he married?"

"I don't know," Mitch said. "And I don't care, either." When Mitch went to bed a little later, he had some new thoughts to sort out. Mom had acted almost like a girl who had seen a cute boy. Mitch didn't remember Dad, who had died when Mitch was two. But he wasn't at all sure he wanted Mom to act like that.