



DAD WILL MAKE IT

BY DOUGLAS EVANS

7:30 a.m. I was heading out the door when the phone rang.

Mom answered it. “Martin! It’s four-thirty in the morning on the East Coast,” I heard her say. “Yes, he’s just leaving for school.” She nodded toward me. “David, it’s your father.”

I dropped my backpack in the doorway and grabbed the phone. “Dad, why are you still in New York?” I said. “My play’s tonight. You said you’d be there.”

“A blizzard closed the airport last night, pal,” my father said. “But I’ll be on the first flight out this morning. I’ll make it to your play. No problem.”

I said good-bye and hung up.

“Hard to imagine your father is in a snowstorm,” Mom said, noting the tee-shirt and shorts I wore, my standard school clothes.

“It’s even harder to imagine Dad will be home by curtain time,” I said. “New York City is on the other side of the country.”

“He’ll try his best, David. You know he always does.”

Our dress rehearsal took up most of the afternoon. The play was about the California Gold Rush. I had the part of a gold miner with two words to say. While holding up a gold-painted rock, I shout, “Eureka! Gold!”

3:00 p.m. When I arrived home, an e-mail from Dad was waiting in my computer’s mailbox.

I caught a flight to Dallas Texas and changed planes to San Francisco. Our pilot announced we’re flying over the Rocky Mountains now, but I see only clouds below us. Very beautiful.
Love, Dad

I returned a message,

Dad,
My play starts at 7:30.
David

A reply came a minute later.

I wouldn’t miss it for the world, pal.

5:30 p.m. Dad called again. I heard Mom talk to him about the crowded airport, baggage delays, and long lines.

“Your dad’s plane just landed,” she told me. “He’s waiting for a taxi. He said we should go ahead with dinner without him.”

Mom and I ate supper in front of the TV. Dad took many business trips, so we did this often.

“Nervous?” Mom asked.

I shrugged. “Not about the play. More about Dad.”

The airport was on the other side of San Francisco Bay, and this was rush hour. The TV news showed long traffic jams on the Bay Bridge.

“David, you know your father,” Mom said. “If he promised to be at your play, he’ll do all he can to be there.”

“I know.”

6:40 p.m. The phone rang again. This time I answered it and heard Dad’s voice.

“Listen, pal, bridge traffic is backed up for miles,” he said. “You better go on to school with your mother. I’ll just have time to get home, change, and make it to the play by half-past seven. No problem. Tell your mom I’ll meet her outside the gym door.”

“OK, Dad,” I said. “I’ll look for you in the audience.”

“I’ll be there, pal.”

Mom and I left the house in silence. I wore my gold-miner’s outfit, baggy jeans with suspenders, a flannel shirt, and an old cowboy hat.

7:10 p.m. The school parking lot was full when we arrived. Mom parked down the street, and we ran to the school. At the gym door, Mom’s cell phone chirped in her purse. She took it out and checked the screen.

“Dad?” I asked.

She nodded. “He sent a text message,” she said. “You better hurry to your classroom, David. It’s almost show time.”

My heart sunk. I knew the news was bad. Dad was delayed

again.

7:20 p.m. My classroom was all loud chatter and kids running around.

“Quiet, class,” my teacher called out. “Now that everyone’s here, we can go to the gym. Remember, gold miners, you go straight onto the stage. Thomas, be ready to open the curtain when I give the nod. OK, here we go. Break a leg.”

7:30 p.m. I knelt on stage by a painted stream. I held a metal pie plate that served for a gold-mining pan. The overhead lights were bright and hot.

Offstage, my teacher nodded, and Thomas pulled the curtain chord. The curtain split open and I looked out into the gym. People sat in rows of folding chairs.

While pretending to pan for gold, I searched the faces. I spotted other fathers, but not mine. My throat tightened. I knew my dad had tried his best to be there. Things happen. But still, I couldn’t help feeling let down.

Then, halfway up the center aisle, something caught my eye. Next to the end chair stood a suitcase. A suitcase? I glanced over and almost let out a cheer. There sat Dad, all smiles. He wore his blue winter suit. He must have come straight from the airport. He made it! All the way from New York. A snowstorm, two airplanes, a taxi, and a traffic jam. He had arrived in time to see me in the school play.

“Eureka!” I called out. “Gold!”