

Petey Did It

By Diane L. Mangum

The truth shall make you free ([John 8:32](#)).

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Oh, kids! All the flowerpots on the porch are knocked over!” exclaimed Mrs. Rossini in a very exasperated voice.

“Petey did it, Mom,” Robbie and Marsha responded in unison.

Of course. Whenever an “accident” happened in the Rossini house, the other children always claimed that “Petey did it.”

The kitchen door swung open, and with every step, three-year-old Peter left a little pile of sand on the kitchen floor. “Mama, come see. I made the biggest mountain in the world in the sandbox. It’s beautiful!”

“Petey, please shake the sand off before you come into the house. Now then, is your mountain beautiful, or terrific?”

“It’s both—my mountain is beautiful!” Petey grinned as he ran out the door, knocking over the scrub bucket of water his mother had just used to clean the kitchen floor.

Petey “did it,” all right. Everywhere he went, a mess was sure to follow. Mrs. Rossini wiped up the water and sand with a sigh, then went out to view Peter’s sand mountain.

Marsha and Robbie giggled over their little brother’s disasters. It was almost a family joke for them to shout, “Petey did it! Petey did it!” even if little Peter wasn’t around.

It just seemed funny for Marsha to say “Petey did it!” when Mother wondered what had happened to the last cookie in the bag. Or Robbie might smile and say, “Petey did it,” when no one could quite remember how the schoolbooks were misplaced.

When all three children were scrambling to get the first waffle from the big platter on the table at breakfast, the syrup was knocked over. Of course, Marsha and Robbie giggled and claimed that “Petey did it.” When his mother asked, “Peter, did you bump over the syrup?” he answered, “Yes, Mama. I did, and I’m very **sorry**.”

After breakfast, the Rossini children were sent to sweep the garage. Marsha moved the boxes and straightened things a bit while Robbie started with the broom. Peter tried to hold the dustpan.

“Marsha, I can’t sweep that corner unless you move Dad’s bike. Why don’t you put it in the driveway?”

“Sure. Hey, Petey. Do you want to sit on the seat while I push the bike into the driveway?”

“Yes, yes, yes! Lift me up, Marsha, please.”

“Up you go,” Marsha said as she lifted the little boy onto Dad’s bicycle. “Hold on to me while I push you.”

Robbie quickly swept that corner of the garage, then followed Marsha and Peter. “That looks fun. Let me try it, Marsh.”

Off the children went, down the street, taking turns pushing Peter on the bike. They hadn’t gone very far when one of their friends shouted to them from his yard.

“Robbie! Marsha! Peter! Do you want to see my new kitten?”

Who could resist? Marsha helped Petey jump down, and all three ran to see Kevin’s new kitten. No one thought at all about Dad’s bike. A few minutes later a big garbage truck rumbled around the corner and ran right over the front wheel of the bicycle.

All afternoon the children sat in their rooms and worried about what to tell their father. How could they explain it? Somehow, when Dad came in, before he could even say anything, the words just rushed out of Robbie’s mouth, “Petey did it.”

“That’s right,” said Marsha. “Petey was riding your bike and left it in the road, and the truck ran over it.”

“I did, Daddy. I went to see Kevin’s kitten, and I forgot your bike, and it got runned over. I’m **sorry**, Daddy,” Petey said with big tears in his eyes.

“Well, we’ll talk more about this later. All of you go wash your hands for dinner now.”

During dinner, Marsha felt terrible and Robbie felt worse. The two children thought over and over about the questions that Dad had not asked them. Dad hadn’t asked how Peter could have gotten on the bike, or how he could have ridden it by himself when his feet didn’t even reach the pedals. Dad knew that Peter couldn’t even open the garage door by himself.

It didn’t feel like a joke to blame Peter anymore for everything. Robbie pushed his potatoes around with his fork and thought how he was really more to blame than Peter. He knew better than to leave a bike in the road.

Marsha stared at her plate. She thought about little Petey telling Dad that he had ridden the bike. It was time to be accountable for her part in the ruined bike. “Dad,” Marsha blurted out, “it wasn’t really Petey. I’m the one who put him on your bike and gave him a ride. I’m really **sorry** I took your bike and let it get run over.”

“Me, too, Dad,” Robbie hurried to add. “Petey was just riding, and I was pushing too. We all left it in the road. Can I do something to help get it fixed?”

“Thank you, kids, for telling me the whole truth, not just part of it. Maybe we can figure out a way for you to help fix the bike. Maybe we also need a new family rule. From now on the only one in the Rossini family who can say ‘Petey did it’ is Peter himself.”

“And I’ll tell you when Marsha did it,” said a smiling Marsha.

“And I’ll learn to say ‘Robbie did it,’ ” said a much happier Robbie.





